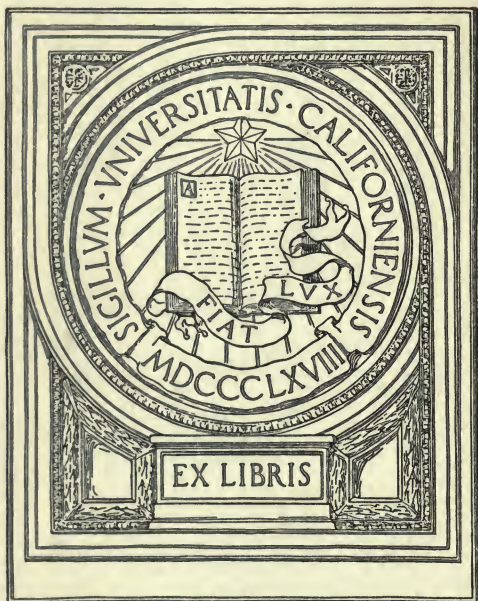


IN THE WILDS OF THE
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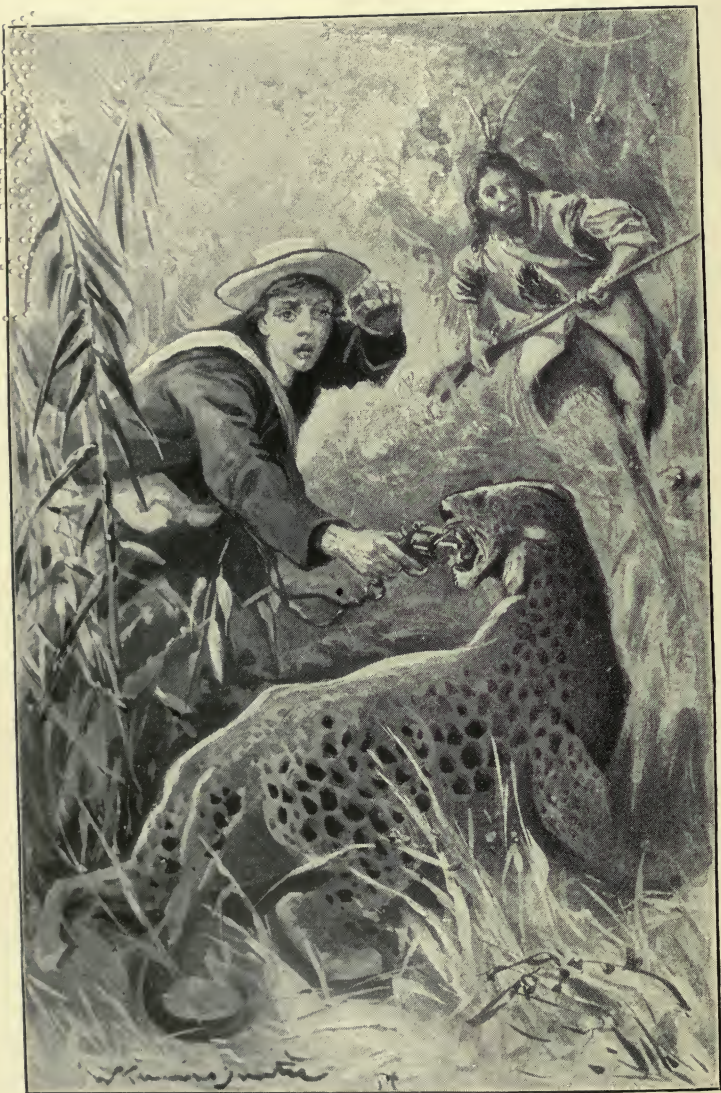
J. M. OXLEY



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"Freckles thrust his pistol right into the animal's gaping mouth."

IN THE WILDS

OF

THE WEST COAST

BY

James J. MACDONALD OXLEY

Author of "Diamond Rock," "Up Among the Ice-Floes"

"The Wreckers of Sable Island"

&c., &c.



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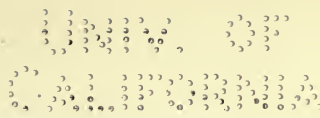
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IN THE WILDS OF THE WEST COAST.

CHAPTER I.

THE FOUNDING OF FORT VICTORIA.

JUST fifty years ago a small steamer, by name the *Beaver*, set forth from the inland port of Nisqually on the west coast of North America. She was an ugly-looking black craft, hardly to be compared with a modern harbor tug; but she was bent upon a mission, of whose importance she seemed to have some knowledge — she puffed her way so noisily northward, through Puget Sound and Admiralty Inlet, until Port Townsend was reached about dusk of the evening.

Here a stay was made for the night, of which the seamen took advantage to catch a plentiful supply of cod and halibut. The following morning, after a brief call at New Dungeness, the *Beaver* steered boldly across the Juan de Fuca Strait, heading for the southern extremity of the great island of Vancouver, and, having carefully crept

around Shoal Point, came to anchor before sundown in a beautiful harbor then bearing the name of Camosun Bay.

On the vessel's deck stood a group of men, who gazed eagerly at the scene before them, and pointed this way and that as the different features of the landscape attracted their attention, exchanging quick comments thereon with an earnestness that evinced no ordinary interest. They were not mere chance visitors—that was clear. Their coming had a definite purpose beyond a doubt, and they were eager to see all they could before darkness shut the shores from their vision.

The central figure of the group was a man in the prime of life, whose appearance would have commanded attention the world over. Six feet and more in height, as erect in his carriage and measured in his movements as an army veteran, yet natural and graceful withal, his stalwart frame and bronzed countenance told of a life of activity and exposure. From his massive shoulders rose a splendid head, with high broad brow, deep gray eyes, and strong yet kindly mouth. Every tone of his voice and turn of his body bespoke energy and resolution. He was a manifest leader of men, and now as he replied to the questions of those around him, or made some remark himself, his words were listened to with a deference that showed him to be a person of no mean importance.

“I like it well,” said he, with a sweep of his right arm that took in the whole landscape before him. “There will be little trouble in finding a grand position for our fort. If it were not so near nightfall I would land at

once. But it will be wiser to wait until morning, and then we can proceed at our leisure."

Some of the others would evidently have liked to venture ashore late as it was, but they knew there was no reversing their leader's decision, so the group broke up, and presently the steward's summons to the evening meal gave another turn to their thoughts.

All but one disappeared below. The remaining member of the group, instead of following the others, sprang upon the top of the cabin skylight in order to get a better view of an object which had attracted his attention. His quick eye had caught sight of a canoe half hidden in the shadow cast by the trees on the farther shore, and he was curious to see whether it would approach the steamer. It was certain to contain Indians, for no white man stood on the island at that time, and he wanted to be the first to get a glimpse of the natives.

But the canoe kept timidly in the shadow, and presently a strong voice called up from the cabin, —

"What's keeping you, Rae? Why don't you come to your supper?"

"All right. I'm coming," was the cheery response, and with one last look at the lingering canoe he too vanished down the companion-way.

As he slipped into his seat at the closely-set table in the narrow cabin, the man at the head said in a tone of kindly banter, —

"Your hunger can't be so keen as usual this evening, Rae; or was it that your curiosity for the time got the better of it?"

“I was watching a canoe I saw close inshore, sir,” answered Rae. “I thought it might come out to us.”

“Did any one else notice that canoe?” asked the first speaker, glancing around the table.

No one claiming to have done so, he turned again to Rae, and with a smile of warm approval, such as rarely lighted up his rugged features, said, —

“You’ve got sharp eyes, my boy, and you know right well how to use them. Here now you have seen something that all of us old folks missed, and it was something of importance too.”

Rae blushed to the roots of the hair with pleasure at these words of praise, as well he might, for the speaker was no other than James Douglas, chief factor of the Hudson Bay Company, and by far the most important and influential personage on the north-west coast of the continent.

For a mere boy to engage the interest of such a man was no common privilege, and brought up as he had been in the atmosphere of the great company’s life, Rae was fully alive to his good fortune. In his eyes Mr. Douglas was a veritable demigod, and to win his commendation was to achieve the highest honor the world afforded.

Rae, however, was no ordinary boy. If he had been, this story would perchance have not been worth the telling. Into his life already there had come more of strange experience and exciting adventure than is likely to fall to the lot of many of those who may read these pages.

He was the son of an officer in the Hudson Bay Company who had taken advantage of a trip to San Francisco

to bring back with him a bride, whose love for her husband steeled her heart against the vicissitudes and deprivations of life in one of the company's forts. When but six years of age Rae had lost his mother, and thenceforth his father had made him his constant companion, finding in his bright presence the only assuaging of the grief that had else been insoluble.

The result of this bringing up was to make little Rae wise and manly beyond his years. Being continually in the society of his seniors, he soon got to see things from their point of view. Not that he had by any means become that pitiful parody of boyhood called a "prig." Far from it. He was as hearty and natural a youngster as could be desired, thoroughly fond of play, and no less prone to indulge in merry pranks than any other boys of his age. Where the difference between him and his playmates showed itself was in his fondness in imitating the men, and the astonishing address with which he carried it out. To paddle a canoe, to manage a rifle, to order about the Indians, were the controlling ambitions of his young heart, and he would not know a contented mind until he had become proficient in all of them.

When the *Beaver* appeared in Camosun Bay, Rae Finlayson had just passed his fifteenth birthday, although his appearance would have given the impression that he was full two years older. He stood over five feet in his stockings, yet was not thin nor lanky, his frame being admirably proportioned, and his muscles already well developed by a life of almost continual out-door activity. His feat-

ures were regular, his skin clear, his eyes large and full of fire, and altogether one would have been inclined to call him a handsome boy, particularly when the smile that came so readily to his bright face disclosed a set of flashing white teeth that were competent to crack nuts with any squirrel in the forest.

After Mr. Douglas had spoken so warmly, Rae's father questioned him about the canoe, and whether he could make out how many occupants it had. But this Rae could not tell him, the shadow in which it hid being so deep ; so the talk went off to other things, and when they rose from the table it was too dark to see beyond a step's length from the vessel.

The following morning the first one to set foot upon the deck was Rae, and to his vast delight he found the steamer fairly surrounded by canoes filled with the natives of the island, who had come out to gaze in wonder at the monster of the deep whose strange black form had broken in upon the solitude of their beautiful bay.

The eager, curious looks of these people Rae returned with a gravity equal to their own. Having passed his whole life in the midst of Indians, and in the company of men who knew perfectly how to deal with these children of the forest, there was nothing startling to him in their appearance in sufficient numbers to overwhelm those on board the *Beaver* had they in mind the capture of the steamer.

Instead of being in any wise alarmed, indeed, he forthwith began to ask questions of the nearest ones ; but, master as he was of more than one dialect, he entirely failed

to make himself understood, and provoked at his non-success, he was about to go in quest of his father, who had some knowledge of nearly all the Indian languages on the coast, when Mr. Douglas appeared on deck.

“Hullo, Rae, my boy!” he exclaimed, “you’ve got the start of us all this morning. Hey! what have we here?” he continued, as his eye fell on the encircling canoes. “The natives have come out to make a morning call. Well, I hope they are in an amiable frame of mind, for we want to get on the right side of them at the start and keep there. I must try if I can make them understand me.”

Going to the side of the steamer, he hailed the Indians in his strong commanding voice and inquired who was their spokesman. At first they did not appear to understand his question, so he repeated it with an accompaniment of gesture that showed what an adept he was at the sign language. This time they caught his meaning, and after consulting together for a moment one canoe pushed out from the others, having in its bow a splendid-looking Indian whose dress and deportment indicated that he was one of their chiefs. With him Mr. Douglas managed to hold quite a dialogue by dint of an unsparing use of signs, as the outcome of which the chief somewhat hesitatingly advanced to the steamer’s side, and then, although in considerable trepidation, was persuaded to come on board.

By this time the rest of the party had assembled on deck, and they gazed with great interest upon their visitor, who, reassured by the manifest kindliness of their countenances, became more at his ease, and looked about him as though he

would like to ask a good many questions if he only knew how to make himself understood.

Rae regarded him with feelings of mingled curiosity and admiration. This no doubt was the chief of the Songhies, the tribe that occupied this part of the island, and whose good graces it was eminently desirable to cultivate, for he and his people had it in their power to render the *Beaver's* mission a success or a failure according to the way they took it.

Now Rae was exceedingly anxious that it should be a success. There was a novelty about it that delighted his adventurous young spirit, as the purpose of the steamer's coming was nothing less than the establishment of a new station of the Hudson Bay Company. It had been decided that the great island of Vancouver should be no longer left unoccupied (for, of course, its aboriginal inhabitants did not count), and Camosun Bay had been selected as the most advantageous site for the new fort.

No sooner had Rae's father heard of the design than he volunteered to be one of the garrison of the fort. He wanted to get away from Fort Vancouver, and here was an opportunity after his own heart. Mr. Douglas not only granted his request at once, but put him in command of the party of occupation. He had therefore come to Camosun Bay in better spirits than he had known for many a day.

"We shall have a fine time of it over on the island, shan't we, Rae?" he had said to his son on the way up. "There must be better hunting there than anywhere near Fort Vancouver, and they say the Indians aren't a bit dangerous."

Certainly they looked innocent enough this morning as they hung about the steamer, pushing their canoes closer and closer as the presence of their chief on board increased their courage.

“They seem to be quite glad to see us, father, don’t they?” exclaimed Rae, having succeeded in tempting the occupants of a near canoe into a broad grin by smiling at them in his heartiest fashion. “I’m going to make friends with them as fast as I can.”

“Do so by all means, my boy,” said Mr. Douglas, overhearing the remark. – “We want them to be as well disposed toward us as possible, not only for the safety of the fort, but so that they will bring us plenty of furs.”

When the honors of the ship had been done to the Indian chief, and his heart made glad by the presentation of a big silver medal for himself, and some trinkets for his family, Mr. Douglas announced that he would go on shore for the purpose of choosing the site of the new fort.

The gig was accordingly brought alongside, and, the Indian having returned to his canoe, the whole party got in with the exception of Rae, who stood at the gangway watching them wistfully as they took their seats. He had not been told to join them, and he did not know if he was wanted. But just as the boat was shoving off Mr. Douglas looked up, and saw his eager face already beginning to take on a disappointed expression.

“O laddie!” he cried, “we were near forgetting you. Jump on the bow there, quick! You shall come with us, of course.”

With radiant countenance Rae sprang into the boat, and, the sailors bending to their oars, the well-filled gig moved off shoreward, convoyed by a cloud of canoes that found it easy work keeping pace with the heavier craft.

Seated in the bow of the gig Rae felt as though he were taking part in some sort of a procession, and he enjoyed it immensely. In fact he was strongly tempted to indulge in a whoop or two, but the presence of Mr. Douglas restrained him; so he contented himself with springing ashore with a shout the moment the boat touched the beach, thus gaining the honor of being the first to land.

A more attractive and advantageous site for a station could hardly have been conceived. The country around the bay was so like a beautiful park that one might well hesitate to believe it was all the work of unaided nature. Through the fertile vales, shady groves, and grassy slopes of the rolling plateau ran serpentine streams of glistening water, which found their way over a rim of smooth rocks that seemed as if placed by human hands in the bosom of the bay whose crystal-clear waves gently lapped the boulder-strown beach.

The eastern side of the harbor was entirely unoccupied, the Songhies having built their fortified camp on the western side on a point about a mile from the entrance. Mr. Douglas therefore looked to the east for the site of his fort, and there were so many tempting spots available that he had some difficulty in coming to a decision. Finally a location by the shore at a place where the rocks made a natural wharf against which vessels could lie to land goods

was decided upon, and with characteristic energy the expedition's leader set about the building of the fort.

His own men were put to work squaring timber and digging a well, while the Indians, who had gathered about in large numbers, having heard with much approval that their white brothers had come to bring them arms and implements, clothing and trinkets, in exchange for skins, were given employment in getting out big pickets for the stockade, their wages being at the rate of one blanket for forty pickets. As these pickets were each twenty-two feet long, and a yard in circumference, the wages were none too high. But the unsophisticated natives were quite content, and toiled away cheerfully with the aid of axes lent by Mr. Douglas.

His father's attention being engrossed with the building of the fort, Rae was thrown upon his own resources, and for lack of other companions, he tried to get into the good graces of the Indian boys who hung bashfully about watching the progress of the work.

But they would have nothing to do with him. He was the first white boy they had ever seen, and it seemed as if they did not know what to make of him. As Rae could not speak a word of their dialect, and had not yet learned to make himself understood by signs, the chances of scraping acquaintance appeared small, so, feeling rather irritated at the little redskins' unsociability, he strolled off along the beach, saying to himself that when he came to a nice bit of sandy bottom he would go in for a swim.

It was a perfect morning, the sun shining bright and

warm from a cloudless sky, not a breath of wind stirring, and Camosun Bay gleaming like a mirror from shore to shore. Rae soon forgot the bad manners of the Indian boys in his enjoyment of the scene.

“I’m so glad we’ve come here,” he soliloquized. “It’s a far finer place than old Fort Vancouver, and once I’m good friends with the boys here we’ll have fine times canoeing and swimming in the harbor, and there must be lots of things to shoot in these woods too. I’ll have plenty of chances to try the dear little rifle father got for me before we came away. I wish I had it here now. I’d like to try a shot at that gull flying about out there.”

But the new rifle was on board the *Beaver*, so Rae was fain to content himself with shying a stone at the white sea-bird when one of its graceful circles brought it near. But the stone did no more harm than to send a series of concentric ripples over the glassy surface of the harbor, and the thrower of it presently reaching a bewitching little cove fit for the bower of a mermaid, once more bethought himself of a bathe.

He could swim like a young seal, his father having begun to give him lessons when he was six years old, and the water being at just the right temperature, he was tempted to go out a hundred yards or more from shore, sporting and splashing about as though the water was his natural element.

While thus enjoying himself he chanced to glance on shore at the cove where he had left his clothes, and was

horrified to see that a number of the native children had taken possession not only of his dressing-room, but of his garments also, and were inspecting the latter with lively interest, passing them from hand to hand, and exchanging expressions of wonder at their construction.

Now had these unexpected intruders upon the privacy of his bath been only boys, Rae's immediate action would have been to swim ashore at the top of his speed, and order them out of the cove.

But to his profound dismay he made out that there were several girls in the party, and his sense of propriety was altogether too strong for him to entertain the notion of leaving the water while they were present. So, swimming in until his feet touched bottom, he called out in a polite yet commanding tone of voice, —

“Will you please leave my clothes alone and go away? I'm coming in to dress now.”

The impertinent young Indians heard him right enough, although of course they could not understand what he said. But they showed not the slightest intentions of heeding him. On the contrary, having completed the examination of his clothing to their own satisfaction, they now began to try it on; one boy taking the coat and another the trousers, while two of the girls endeavored between them to solve the mystery of the shirt.

This was altogether too much for Rae's patience, and quite losing his temper, he started to shout at them ferociously, —

“Let my clothes alone, will you, you miserable little

scoundrels! If you don't drop them at once, and clear out of that, I'll—"

Just what dire penalty he would have threatened to inflict they never heard, for at that moment his feet slipped off the seaweed-covered stone upon which he stood the better to express his feelings, and in his effort to steady himself he took an involuntary header that put a stop for the moment to his angry speech.

He had just recovered his balance and was clearing his eyes of water when he caught sight of his father hurrying along the beach at a rate that betokened some anxiety.

"Father, father! Oh, quick!" cried Rae at the top of his voice. "Drive those rascals away! They won't let me dress."

Mr. Finlayson came up on the full run, and the instant the little Indians heard his heavy step they dropped the clothes, and scuttled off like squirrels, vanishing among the rocks as completely as if they had been phantoms.

"Why, Rae," panted Mr. Finlayson, "what have you been doing? I missed you a little while ago, and not seeing you anywhere began to feel anxious. Then somebody said they had seen you going off in this direction, and so I came after you. What's the matter? What's happened?"

The timely appearance of his father having banished Rae's alarms, he now felt rather ashamed of having got so excited.

"Oh, nothing's happened, father," he replied as he picked up his clothes, and started to put them on; "but

if you hadn't come along just when you did there might have been some trouble. You see I thought I'd have a swim, and while I was in the water a lot of young Indians came along, and began to make free with my clothes. I wouldn't have minded if they'd just been boys, but"—and here a rosy blush reddened his cheeks—"there were some girls too, and I couldn't come out of the water before them."

Mr. Finlayson laid back his head and laughed long and loud. He had been apprehensive of some mishap, instead of which he had lighted upon a ludicrous situation that would make a capital story for his companions.

"You were in a funny fix, certainly, my boy," said he when his laughter had ceased. "But," he added with a graver countenance, "you must be more careful, Rae. We don't know these Indians well yet, and you must keep closer until we do. Let us go back to the steamer now. It's nearly time for dinner."

CHAPTER II.

IN PERILS OF WATERS.

THE construction of the fort proceeded rapidly under Mr. Douglas's vigorous superintendence, and ere long was sufficiently advanced for him to feel free to leave a number of men to complete it, while he steamed off northward to the other forts, two of which were to be abandoned, and their men and stores transferred to the new station.

As Rae had never been on board a steamer before, and had keenly enjoyed the trip up from Nisqually, his father proposed that he should remain on board if Mr. Douglas would have him. He would then enjoy a good long voyage, besides being out of the way while the building was going on.

Rae jumped at the notion, and Mr. Douglas promptly acquiescing, the way was clear for him to go. He had not taken thought of the miseries of sea-sickness, for which the smooth voyage up from Nisqually was no preparation, and the idea of being out on the big ocean filled him with delight.

It was a fine morning in June when the clumsy little

Beaver got up steam again, and puffing like a fire-engine, moved out through the narrows into Juan de Fuca Strait, and thence into the Pacific Ocean. Standing at the stern, Rae waved his hat in farewell to his father as long as he could make him out upon the shore. It was the first time he had ever gone away from his father, although of course his father had often been obliged to leave him for months at a time while he went far inland on the business of the company. Naturally, therefore, Rae felt the separation, and he had to wink very hard indeed to keep the tears from showing themselves on his cheeks.

The turn of the channel had just caused the half-finished fort to disappear from sight when Mr. Douglas came up, and laying his hand kindly on the boy's shoulder, said,—

“Well, Rae, what sort of a sailor are you? Were you ever out in a storm?”

“No, sir,” answered Rae, his air of dejection vanishing in an instant, for he entertained feelings of profound admiration for the chief factor, and was always glad at being noticed by him. “I’ve never been on the water in a storm. You know, sir, this is the first time I’ve ever been on board a steamer.”

“Indeed,” responded Mr. Douglas. “So it’s a new experience for you. Well, for your sake, I hope we’ll have fine weather all the trip. But there’s no telling; a storm may spring up any day, and if it does, the little *Beaver* is a wonder to roll, so you may expect to have a taste of sea-sickness.”

“Is it very dreadful, sir?” asked Rae, anxiously.

Mr. Douglas smiled. A good many years had passed since he had first suffered sea-sickness while, as a mere boy, making the voyage from Jamaica, the place of his birth, to Scotland, where he was educated; still he had a sufficiently distinct recollection of that experience to cause him to answer,—

“You’ll probably feel as if the greatest favor one could do you would be to pitch you overboard, and so put an end to your wretchedness. But you mustn’t mind that. You’ll soon get your sea legs, and then you’ll enjoy yourself all the more.”

Rae shook his head ruefully. Like all healthy boys, he hated the very notion of being sick on land or sea, and he was determined to make a brave fight of it, and see if he could not hold out even if a storm did spring up.

It was not long before his resolution was put to the test. As soon as the *Beaver* passed out of Juan de Fuca Strait she began to rise and dip in the long waves of the Pacific Ocean, that rolled in unbroken phalanxes from the far east. As Mr. Douglas had said, she was a wonder to roll, and had not got beyond Barclay Sound before the novel motion proved too much for poor little Rae, and he dragged himself into his berth, where for the next twenty-four hours he felt so miserably ill that he thought surely he must be going to die.

He missed his father sorely. Not even Mr. Douglas’s hearty sympathy availed to comfort him. Oh, how intensely he wished himself back on land! The combina-

tion of home-sickness and sea-sickness was really almost overwhelming; and he seemed in so wretched a plight that Mr. Douglas for a time regretted having brought him.

But it's a long lane that has no turning, and soon matters began to mend. Rae's internal economy showed signs of returning reason, and, in proportion as his discomfort mitigated, his wonted high spirits reasserted themselves, until by the end of the third day out he was as firm on his feet as Mr. Douglas himself, and ready to enjoy the voyage.

For such a keen-eyed, quick-witted lad there was a great deal to be observed and understood. The steamer did not venture far from the land, and her passengers had a steady succession of views — some grand and inspiring, and others lovely and enchanting — as she made her way northward along the coast of the great island of Vancouver.

But it was not the still life of the land that attracted Rae so much as the active life of the water. The region through which they were passing was simply a paradise for fishermen. The sea fairly swarmed with unnumbered varieties of fish that sprang to the hook as if they had been waiting for it all their lives, and were delighted that their opportunity had come at last.

Not only so, but different kinds of seals dotted the waves with their sleek black heads, and gazed at the puffing monster which had intruded upon their domain with their big brown eyes full of gentle wonder.

Rae thought them so pretty, that when Mr. Douglas suggested he should try his skill as a marksman on them, he shrank from the idea, saying apologetically, —

“Oh, no, sir; I wouldn’t like to do that. They don’t do any harm to anybody, do they?”

Mr. Douglas laughed.

“Harm anybody!” he exclaimed; “bless me, no. They’re the most harmless creatures in the world. But people like to shoot them all the same. I confess, however, I think the more of you, my boy, for not wanting to do it. After all, what’s the sense of killing a thing just for the sake of killing it.”

It was the following day that Rae, who had already got to feel so much at home that he had chosen the cross-trees of the stubby foremast as his favorite eyry whence to look out upon the waste of waters, came tumbling down in a state of great excitement, and running up to Mr. Douglas as he was enjoying a pipe at the stern, dragged him to the side of the steamer.

“Look, sir, look!” he cried, pointing a quivering finger to the westward. “What’s that? Is it another steamer, or what is it?”

Following the direction of Rae’s finger, Mr. Douglas made out a black mass moving in a course that would take it across the *Beaver’s* bows, and sending up at frequent intervals a spout of foam not unlike a column of smoke, such as might come from a steamer’s furnace.

“A steamer?” he exclaimed. “No, but a whale; and a monster too! I wonder if I could secure him. It’s worth trying, at all events.”

Whereupon orders were sent to the engineer to give the *Beaver* all the steam the boilers could stand, and presently

the sturdy vessel was ploughing through the water at her topmost speed. The wind was blowing away from the whale and towards the steamer, so that there was no fear of the latter's noise reaching the great creature; and it was Mr. Douglas's design to run up as near as possible, and then try a shot from the small six-pounder which was carried in the bow. A lucky shot might reach a vital part, and then the steamer could rush up, and make fast the body before it sank.

Intense was the excitement on board the *Beaver* during the next few minutes. When first sighted by Rae the whale was about a mile and a half away, going at half-speed in the direction of the mainland, probably chasing a school of the tiny fish which formed its food. It evidently did not notice the approach of the steamer, for it kept right on, sending up spout after spout as though for the fun of the thing.

To get a good view of the chase Rae had hastened back to the fore-top, and there, trembling with excitement, watched every movement of the monster as though his very life were at stake. It was his first sight of a whale, and he thought it a very wonderful object. Furthermore, having been the first on board the vessel to observe it, he felt all the more eager for the capture.

On went the steamer, drawing nearer and nearer to its prey, and still the latter did not take warning. Presently it came to a stop, perhaps to enjoy a good mouthful of food, and at once the *Beaver's* engines stopped also, letting her glide through the water with the impetus already received.

"Now's our chance," said Mr. Douglas in an under-

tone. "We must fire before she starts again. Is the gun ready?"

"Yes, sir," replied the mate in whose charge it was. "Shall I fire?"

"Take good aim and let her have it," was the response.

All on board held their breath as the mate sighted along the breech of the little cannon, and Rae nearly fell off his lofty perch in his anxiety to see him do it. Unconscious of the danger so imminent, the whale lay like a log amid the waves that lapped its black sides. There was a moment of thrilling suspense, and then came a report that stunned the ears of all, while the gun kicked clear off its carriage, and rolled down into the lee scuppers, the mate just managing to dodge out of the way.

At the same instant the whale, throwing its huge body almost clear out of the water in a spasm of mortal agony, dived into the depths, leaving upon the surface a trail of blood that showed the ball had found its way to a vital part. A cheer went up from those on board the steamer, and Mr. Douglas, forgetting his wonted reserve in the excitement of the moment, clapped the mate warmly upon the back, exclaiming, —

"Well aimed, Ross; a capital shot! She's badly hit without a doubt."

Rae gave a lusty cheer at the success of the shot, and would have liked to wave his cap also, but he needed both hands to hold on. Every eye now eagerly scanned the surface of the water, watching for the first sign of the wounded monster's reappearance. They had not long to



"Ceasing its struggles, it bore down on the steamer at full speed."

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wait; scarce three minutes had passed when, with a rush like that of a locomotive, it shot out of the water only a few lengths away from the steamer. For some moments it thrashed around, beating the waves into foam with thundering strokes of its tremendous tail. Then its eye, inflamed with fury, fell upon the black hull of the *Beaver* rocking gently in the waves awaiting the end. At once the suffering creature connected the presence of this intruder with the injury inflicted, and determined on revenge. Ceasing its struggles it headed towards the steamer, and bore down upon her at full speed.

“Back her! back her!” shouted Mr. Douglas to the engineer.

The order was promptly obeyed; but how could so clumsy a craft as the *Beaver* hope to evade such a pursuer as a maddened whale? Hardly had she got way on when the collision came with appalling force, hurling to the deck all those who had not something to hold on by, and so nearly knocking Rae off his lofty perch that he instantly scrambled down for fear of further danger.

“Shoot her! Harpoon her! Lance her!” cried different members of the crew, in dread of a repetition of the charge; while Mr. Douglas, with the aid of the mate, strove to replace the gun in its carriage, that another shot might be fired from it.

But it was not necessary. The whale was incapable of further harm. With its huge head wofully battered it now lay almost motionless, its life blood spreading out

over the water in great crimson patches. One more flurry, and that a pitifully weak one, and it was all over.

“Stand by to secure her!” shouted Mr. Douglas, snatching up a coil of rope as though he himself would do the work. There was on board, however, a seaman who had been on more than one whaling cruise, and he knew exactly what had to be done.

The steamer moved up alongside the inert body, and by a dexterous twist the ex-whaler got a purchase around the flukes of its tail. The rope was then hauled tight, and another having been got round the head, the whale was safely fastened fore and aft to await further attention.

Great was the rejoicing on board at this successful ending of the hunt, for the prize was certainly one of the largest of its kind, and could not fail to yield a big supply of whalebone.

But just when the congratulations were at their height the engineer appeared with a grave countenance, and beckoned Mr. Douglas to one side.

“The steamer’s leaking badly,” said he in a low tone. “There’s two feet of water in the well already, and it’s gaining rapidly. We must man the pumps, and make for shore as fast as we can.”

Mr. Douglas’s face clouded over at this startling communication.

“Are you quite sure?” he asked. “I’ll go and see for myself.”

He hurried below; while Rae, who had been standing

near, and overheard all the engineer said, looked after him anxiously.

Presently he came up on deck again, and one glance at his face was sufficient to show that the engineer's report was only too correct. Not a moment did the chief factor hesitate. It was very trying to lose the prize so cleverly won, but human life was far more precious, and it was now in serious peril.

"Cut loose the whale immediately," he commanded.

The mate, who already had been reckoning up his share of the proceeds of the whalebone, turned round with an expression of mingled amazement and protest upon his honest features.

"Cut loose the whale, sir?" he exclaimed in a tone of incredulous inquiry. "Do you mean it, sir?"

"I do mean it, Ross," replied Mr. Douglas; "and there's not a moment to lose. We've got to make a safe harbor inside of an hour or go to the bottom."

Realizing that the chief factor was indeed in earnest, the mate, without stopping to ask further questions, seized a hatchet, and in as little time as it takes to tell it severed the ropes that bound the whale to the steamer. As the huge helpless mass rolled away from the *Beaver* the latter began to move through the water, and soon was making her way at full speed towards the mainland.

Nootka Sound was the nearest haven, and for this Mr. Douglas steered, while the men toiled at the pumps with a vigor that sent the water gushing in great streams through the scuppers. Rae, filled with fears that pre-

vented his keeping still, oscillated between the engine-room, where there was apprehension lest the water should rise sufficiently to put out the furnaces, and the deck, where those who were not at the pumps hung over the bulwarks anxiously noting the steamer's progress shoreward.

Although the *Beaver* was really doing her best, it seemed to the anxious men as though she were only crawling through the water, and more than once Mr. Douglas called down to the engineer, —

“Can't you give her more steam, M'Kenzie? she seems to be going very slow.”

Only to be answered, —

“I darn't give her another pound, sir. The boiler wouldn't stand it.”

Thoroughly alive to their danger, Rae kept close by Mr. Douglas. In the absence of his father he looked to him for protection. Nor did he do so in vain. As he returned to the wheel after one of his visits to the engine-room, the chief factor laid his hand kindly on the boy's shoulder, and looking into his face said in a cheering tone, —

“Don't be too much frightened, Rae. If the worst comes I'll look after you, and get you safe ashore somehow. But I think we'll make it all right.”

In spite of the incessant toil at the pumps, which, to tell the truth, were far from being as efficient as they ought to have been, the water gained steadily in the hold until a rise of only eighteen inches more would bring it up to the furnace fires, and once these were quenched there would be no hope of saving the steamer from foundering.

In the meantime Nootka Sound was opening out, and the increasing nearness of its entrance sustained the courage of the *Beaver's* passengers. Mr. Douglas had never explored it before, although he had gone past it several times, nor was any one else on board competent to act as pilot. But he had entire faith in himself, and trusted to his acquaintance with other parts of the coast to guide him now. His hope was to find within the sound some sheltered cove with a sandy beach upon which the steamer could be safely run until the leak could be repaired.

On pressed the little steamer, panting as though the peril of the situation was fully realized. Steadily the water gained in the hold, in spite of the most strenuous efforts of the men at the pumps, and the vessel sank lower in the waves. Mr. Douglas stood at the wheel, his face set and anxious, not a word passing his lips save an occasional word for the engineer which Rae hastened to carry to the engine-room. The other men were busy getting ready the boats for launching, and putting in provisions to last for a week. For the rest they would, if necessary, have to depend upon their guns.

Three-quarters of the hour had passed when the steamer reached the entrance to the sound. In fifteen minutes at the most the steamer must be beached, or she would inevitably founder. Yet, keenly as he glanced to right and left, Mr. Douglas could discover no place suited to his purpose. There was no alternative but to keep on, hoping that when the point on the right was rounded a sandy cove would reveal itself.

Now Rae, finding the strain of anxiety hard to bear, had betaken himself to his favorite post high up the mast, and thence, not less intently than Mr. Douglas was doing below him, scanned the shore for the safe harbor so urgently needed.

In this way he had the good fortune to be the first to espy what was sought, and when the *Beaver* turned the point at the entrance to the Tinpananing Canal, as the long narrow inlets of the sea are called on Vancouver Island, his voice was heard shouting eagerly, —

“There’s the place! See, there! there!”

Every eye was turned in the direction indicated, and, sure enough, just around the corner as it were, a beautiful little bay came into view that fulfilled every object sought. It was perfectly sheltered from the prevailing winds, its waters were consequently smooth and clear, and at its farthest curve was a white sandy beach shining in the sun.

“Thank God!” exclaimed Mr. Douglas devoutly, while a cheer went up from the steamer’s crew. Keeping her head straight for the beach, he gave orders for the engines to be slowed, and in a few minutes more, with so gentle a shock as to be hardly perceptible, the *Beaver* slid up on her soft bed, and all danger of foundering was over.

“Stand by to lower the boat!” called the chief factor, looking immensely relieved as he let go the wheel, and hastened forward just as Rae dropped upon the deck from the rigging.

“Good for you, my boy!” he exclaimed, catching Rae by the shoulders, and lifting him clear off his feet; “your

eyes will make your fortune yet. This is just the sort of place I wanted. Come along with me in the boat, and we'll see if we can find out what's the matter."

A careful examination both outside and inside the steamer's bow revealed the fact that the blow of the maddened whale had been sufficient not to actually stave in any of the timbers, but to strain them apart in such a way as to cause the leak which had been so threatening. The damage done was happily not beyond the skill of the carpenter to repair, and a couple of days' work at the most would suffice for the job.

Immense was the relief of all on this being made known; and as sundown was not far off, the crew at once set about making the vessel secure in her position. Anchors were accordingly set out astern, and the cables hauled taut, so that in event of the wind changing there would be no chance of the stern swinging round; and then, there being nothing further to do for the present, the evening meal next claimed attention.

The following morning, after a further inspection of the leak, and the giving of full directions to the carpenter, Mr. Douglas announced that he would make a visit ashore and see what the country was like. A party of six was quickly made up, comprising, beside himself, the engineer, the mate, a couple of the seamen, and Rae.

There was at first some doubt about Rae being taken; but although he said nothing, he looked so imploringly that the chief factor had not the heart to refuse him.

"Very well then — come along," he said good-hu-

morely, in answer to the boy's unspoken petition. "But be sure and keep close to me, and don't attempt to do any exploring on your own account."

"I'll promise, sir, with all my heart," shouted Rae, rushing off to get his rifle and ammunition.

The woods clothed the country right down to the shore, so, instead of landing beside the steamer, Mr. Douglas had the boat take them some distance up the canal to a spot where the forest was not so dense, and then he sent it back to the steamer with directions to return an hour before sunset.

Before entering the woods the chief factor reviewed his little company to make sure that every gun was loaded, that every one had his hatchet and hunting-knife at belt, and that both he and the engineer had their pocket compasses to guide them in case of getting astray in the forest.

"Come now," said he, having satisfied himself on these points, "let us be off. I'll take the lead, and you, Ross," pointing to the mate, "bring up the rear. Rae, you follow me."

Thus they set off in Indian file through an opening in the forest that promised an easy way into the interior.

Imposing as the trees had appeared when seen *en masse* from the deck of the *Beaver*, they proved on close acquaintance to be for the most part mere crooked stunted scrubs full of knotty excrescences. They were principally firs, with here and there a cedar or a cypress, although whenever there was any open prairie land, oaks showed themselves in fair proportion, while in the low lands the white maple grew abundantly.

Near the shore the country was rough and rocky, and the walking difficult; so that not only for Rae's sake, but for his own, Mr. Douglas made frequent halts. Signs of bird life abounded. Coveys of grouse and partridge, startled at the approach of the white intruders, went whirring away before them, while woodpeckers and bullfinches seemed plentiful.

No attempt was made to bag any of them, however, as they were not yet worth the ammunition, and moreover Mr. Douglas wanted to make as little noise as possible in order that the attention of the natives might not be attracted, for the Nootka Indians had borne an evil reputation ever since the days of the early Spanish explorers.

"With our six rifles we're more than a match for any party of Indians we're at all likely to encounter," said he; "nevertheless I'd prefer that we saw nothing of them, and they nothing of us. It's their country, not themselves, that I'm anxious to become acquainted with. The company might want to put up a fort here some day."

In this desire, however, he was fated to disappointment, for the party had not advanced more than a mile inland before it became evident that their movements were being watched by a band of Indians, the size of which it was impossible to judge since their presence was made known only by an occasional glimpse of them as they slipped silently through the trees to right and left.

"They're all around us," said Mr. Douglas in a low tone. "Look to your rifles, my men."

CHAPTER III.

ON LAND AND SEA.

THE action of their leader more than his words caused the little party to quickly close up ranks until all its members were in touch of each other. Then, with their fore-fingers upon the triggers of their guns, they moved steadily forward, keeping as sharp a look-out as possible.

An ambuscade so far from reinforcements might prove a serious matter; and, anyway, it was Mr. Douglas's desire to establish a friendly footing with the natives, and he was determined to avoid to the last anything approaching a collision.

The thick of the forest was not just the place in which to open negotiations with the people whose ancestral domain was being invaded; and the chief factor, therefore, pushed on in the hope of coming to an open glade or bit of meadow land, where he might hold audience with them if they could be persuaded to show themselves.

For some time the Nootkas made no further demonstration than an occasional hoot, which was evidently a signal from those on one side of the white men to those on the other. But presently, as if taking courage from the latter's

silence, they began to let fly arrows, some of which whistled threateningly near.

“Keep cool now, men,” commanded Mr. Douglas.
“Don’t fire until I give the order.”

“Very good, sir,” was the prompt response.

Now Rae had not the slightest idea of disobeying the chief factor, but, as luck would have it, a minute or two later his foot caught in a hidden tree-root, and in the attempt to save himself from pitching forward he dropped his rifle, which was set off by the fall.

Seeing the tension of nerves they were under it was no wonder that the unexpected report made them all, including Rae, jump as if they had been shot ; and Mr. Douglas, wheeling about, demanded sharply, —

“Who fired that shot? What’s the meaning of it?”

Rae, having just picked up both himself and his rifle, turned an appealing face up to the irate leader.

“It was my gun, sir,” he murmured ; “but indeed I couldn’t help it. I tripped over a root, and it fell out of my hand.”

On seeing how matters stood Mr. Douglas’s indignation moderated.

“You must be more careful, my boy,” said he. “That shot may have done us a good deal of harm.”

Immediately following the report there had been a lively rustling among the trees, which sounded like men rushing frantically through them in a state of panic. The engineer noticed it and so did the mate.

“I think it did us more good than harm, sir,” said the

latter, "for it scared the Indians out of their wits, if I'm not much mistaken."

Mr. Douglas looked keenly about him, while something closely approaching a smile played over his firm mouth.

"The Nootkas have not had much experience of fire-arms," said he, "and they no doubt thought Rae was aiming at them. I hope, however, they're not frightened away altogether, for I want to have a talk with them if they'll give me the chance. Let us push on; I think I see an opening ahead."

Continuing their march a hundred yards further, they came to the break in the forest of which Mr. Douglas's well-trained eye had caught a glimpse, and then a halt was called, and they gathered in a group in the centre of a lovely glade that seemed just meant for a meeting-place.

They all knew perfectly well that the woods around them hid scores of dusky forms, and that every movement was watched by flashing eyes full of hostile intent, but they maintained as calm a front as though they were merely out hunting, and had stopped for a brief rest.

Rae, already beginning to feel weary from the tramp, threw himself down in the deep grass, and watched with intense interest Mr. Douglas's efforts to get the Indians to show themselves.

Leaving aside his rifle and hunting-knife, and picking up a wisp of grass in lieu of a flag of truce, the chief factor advanced about half-way between his party and the edge of the forest, calling out in a dialect that

he hoped would be at least partly intelligible : “ We are friends ; we mean no harm ; we want to give our red brothers presents — see ! ” and he held up some gaudy brass trinkets that glittered in the sunshine.

Whether his words were intelligible or not, his actions were clear enough, and presently as he stood there, his whole attitude and expression bespeaking good-will, first one, then a second, and a third Indian emerged cautiously from the protection of the trees, holding tightly on to their bows and arrows and clubs as if afraid to be without them.

Noting their manifest trepidation, Mr. Douglas called for Rae, and when he came up placed him in front of him, saying, —

“ We’ve not come to fight, but to be friends. See, this is my son. He is no warrior. He will speak peace to you.”

Then handing Rae the trinkets, he bid him go fowards, and offer them to the Indians.

At the sight of the unarmed boy approaching them with the glittering presents the Indians got more bold, and, dropping their weapons, began to advance towards him, moving at first in a hesitating way, but quickening their pace as the desire for the proffered presents overcame their apprehensions, until at length anxiety to be the first to reach them banished all other feelings, and, each one determining not to be outstripped by the others, all three broke into a run.

On they came with eager outstretched hands, so close together that had it been a foot-race the judges would certainly have been obliged to declare a dead heat. Rae

valiantly stood his ground, and as not one of the runners slackened his pace in the slightest, the result was a collision that sent the boy rolling over on his back and scattered the trinkets in all directions.

Paying no heed to the prostrate lad, the three Indians bumped heads in a frantic scramble for the prizes they sought, and Mr. Douglas, who had run up in some alarm lest Rae had been injured, felt strongly tempted to administer a good kick apiece by way of teaching them better manners.

He contented himself, however, with calling them clumsy swine; and as Rae the next moment jumped up with a broad smile on his face, evidently none the worse for his upsetting, his anger vanished at once, and he burst out laughing instead.

"Bless my heart, Rae," he exclaimed, "if that wasn't one of the funniest things I ever saw. Why on earth didn't you dodge those fellows when you saw them bearing down on you like that?"

"I thought they'd go to one side of me, sir," replied Rae. "I never dreamed of their knocking me over."

"You went down like a nine-pin, my lad. Are you sure you're not hurt?"

"Not a bit, sir. I just tumbled over on the grass as easy as possible."

By this time the Indians had found all the trinkets among them, and were absorbed in rapt admiration of the trumpery things, which meant more to them than a new diamond necklace to a duchess.

“Just look at them, Rae,” said Mr. Douglas; “they’re nothing but children, are they? But I must make the most of this chance to have a talk with them.”

By dint of a vigorous use of the sign code he was able to eke out his scanty knowledge of the Nootka dialect, and make himself tolerably well understood, with the result that the Indians, seeming to be perfectly satisfied as to the good intention of the visitors, promised to meet him at the seashore the following morning, and to bring with them a lot of furs for barter.

They then disappeared in the depths of the forest, and feeling very well pleased with what he had accomplished, Mr. Douglas suggested that search should be made for water, and after they had despatched their lunch they should return to the place of meeting with the boat.

A spring of delicious water was found after but little search, and in high good humor the party sat down to discuss the contents of their knapsacks. The steamer’s cook had done his duty nobly, and there was enough and to spare for all, hearty though their appetites were.

While the men were having a pipe after their meal, Rae, feeling thoroughly rested and refreshed, strolled off on his own account, for his was a very active and enterprising spirit, and in spite of oft-repeated parental injunctions he would take ventures that were certainly beyond his years.

He had his rifle in hand, and in his heart was the hope of getting a shot at a fox or squirrel just for the fun of the thing. He was quite an accurate marksman already,

and felt fully equal to disposing of a bear should he happen to meet one. He was not anxious to do so, however, having sufficient common-sense to realize that for the present he might be content with the conviction that he was a match for any ordinary Bruin without running the risk of having the conviction readily disturbed.

The spring which had supplied water for lunch grew into a little brook farther on, and Rae followed its course, thus having a sure guide back to his friends. In one place the brook ran close to the edge of the forest, and as Rae sauntered along his quick ear caught the sound of a rustling in the underbrush on the other side.

At once he dropped to the ground, and, with forefinger on trigger, peered eagerly in the direction from which the noise proceeded. For a moment there was perfect silence. Then the rustling recommenced, and in greater volume. Evidently some large animal was making its way to the water, and would soon become visible.

Rae's heart almost stopped beating in the intensity of his excitement. Here was a chance for him to distinguish himself by bagging some big game while the men were taking it easy. Not a hint for help would he give until he had done his best alone. Another moment's suspense, and then just across the narrow brook, and right in front of him, the head of a great elk broke through the thicket.

As if scenting some danger, and yet not feeling sufficiently sure of its presence to dash away with his thirst unquenched, the superb animal stood like a statue, only

its palpitating nostrils moving as it snuffed the air. This was the time for Rae to fire, and he had just got his rifle to the shoulder, and in another instant would have planted a bullet in the elk's broad breast, when his splendid brown eyes were turned full upon him, and he thought he read in them so moving an appeal for mercy that, yielding to an impulse of tenderness, he dropped his rifle and sprang to his feet, exclaiming as if in reply to a spoken question, —

“No; I won't shoot you. It would be a cruel shame to kill such a beauty as you are. So clear out before the men see you.”

The elk did not need to be told twice. With a snort of sudden affright it wheeled about, and galloped off at a frantic pace that soon carried it out of hearing.

Just at that moment Mr. Douglas came up with a look of inquiry on his face.

“Well, Rae, what have you been doing? Whom were you speaking to?”

Looking the picture of confusion, Rae hung his head, and hesitated to answer. He had a very sensitive spirit, and shrank from ridicule, however good-natured. He felt sure Mr. Douglas would laugh at him when he told what had occurred.

“Come, my boy; speak out,” urged the chief factor. “There's nothing to be ashamed of, I trust.”

“Oh, no, sir,” responded Rae; “but” — and the blush deepened on his brown cheek — “I'm afraid you'll laugh at me when I tell you.” And then without more

ado he proceeded to tell about his letting the elk go unharmed.

Instead of laughing at him, Mr. Douglas, when he had finished, gave him a hearty clap on the back in token of warm approval.

“Indeed I won’t laugh at you, Rae,” said he, in his most cordial tone. “You did the right thing, and I’m proud of you for it. The elk wouldn’t have been fit to eat if you had killed it, and so its death would have done us no good. We kill too many creatures just for the sake of killing them.”

Feeling immensely relieved at this unexpected commendation, Rae picked up his rifle again, and went back with Mr. Douglas to the others, for it was now time to retrace their steps in order to meet the boat at the appointed rendezvous.

They found the boat awaiting them, and made good speed back to the steamer, where they were met with the cheering news that the carpenter had ascertained the full extent of the damage, and would have it all repaired by the end of the following day.

The next morning Rae was up with the dawn, and out on deck to see if there were any signs of the Indians. Sure enough there they were, a whole tribe of them apparently, squatted at the edge of the forest, waiting patiently for the white men to give them their attention.

He waved his cap, and shouted a hearty good morning to them; upon which their chief stood up, and made signals in reply that Rae construed to mean something

like "the top of the morning to you, my boy." Whereupon Rae felt strongly tempted to jump into the boat and paddle ashore, so as to be the first to see what the Indians had brought with them for barter.

But on second thoughts it seemed better for him to wait until Mr. Douglas landed, which, of course, would not be until after breakfast, so he called out, "I can't go in-shore just now, but will in a little while," and then ran below to see if the others were up yet.

He met Mr. Douglas just coming out of his cabin, and told him the Indians had come.

"Good!" said the chief factor; "I'm very glad of it. We'll go ashore as soon as we have breakfast, and see what we can do with them."

Rae was greatly pleased at Mr. Douglas saying "we" in the way he did. It seemed to put him on the same plane as himself, and, although it was little more than a chance expression on the latter's part, it seemed to feed the boy's sense of self-importance to an extent that Mr. Douglas never contemplated. The liability to over-estimate himself was the weak side of Rae's character, and it would take some sharp experiences to teach him the wisdom he needed. That these did not fail to come will duly appear.

Immediately after breakfast Mr. Douglas went ashore, attended by as many men as could be spared from the work, for he wanted to make a deep impression upon the Nootkas. The Indians received him with considerable dignity, and seemed to feel entirely at their ease, although

their visitors carried their rifles as a precaution against any attempt at a surprise.

They were a tall and well-formed people, with countenances betokening a fair degree of intelligence in spite of the extraordinary effect produced by the flattening of the head, which is done in infancy while the skull is soft. Their hair, which was either black or dark brown, being never cut, hung in long thick locks over the shoulders, and for many of them was their sole head-gear in all weathers. Their eyes were dark hazel, and their skin the tint of a dirty copper kettle. Their features were for the most part those which generally mark the North American Indians — namely, long nose, high cheek-bones, and large, ugly mouth; but owing to the flattening of the head already mentioned, their foreheads were villanously low. Upon the whole, they could scarcely be called prepossessing, although they were not absolutely repulsive.

Rae, looking at them in a critical spirit not entirely free from contempt, found himself feeling thankful that he had not been created after that fashion; for, even though the men were somewhat fine-looking, the women had very ugly flat noses, and were extremely dirty, while the children ran about as naked as the day they were born. Now in Rae the love of beauty and the sense of decency were naturally very keen, as they had been in his mother, and if a little dulled by constant contact with what was shocking to both, still they never became torpid as they were in many of those around him; consequently to the end of his days the natives remained

objects of repugnance to the extent that they were either dirty or indecent.

Mr. Douglas, however, did not bother himself on these points. His chief concern was whether they had furs in plenty, and if this were satisfied, he was well content. In the present case he had not much cause for satisfaction. The Nootkas were better fishermen than trappers, and spent far more time in their canoes than in the forest. They had some good skins nevertheless, and at the end of the day's bartering he had acquired, at the cost of a lot of trumpery trinkets, and a couple of dozen hatchets and hunting-knives with a few kettles thrown in, an assortment of furs worth many scores of pounds in London.

There were some superb otter skins from both the land and sea animal; several bear skins, both the black and brown; a lot of wolf skins, black and white; and a large number of minx and squirrel skins, the latter being hardly of any value.

"It wouldn't pay to establish a post here," said Mr. Douglas, reviewing the day's work. "These skins probably form the pick of the tribe's stock, and there wouldn't be another such lot for a year. I think I'll have the *Beaver* call here every spring, though. I'll promise these fellows some guns and powder the next time I come if they'll have a good lot of skins ready. That'll make them take more interest in trapping."

The natives showed great delight on hearing this. They had seen muskets in the hands of some of the tribes to the south with whom they were at war, which gave the others

a great advantage, and the prospect of being put on even terms filled them with joy, so that they readily promised to have plenty of skins ready against the *Beaver's* return.

Rae had among his possessions a pretty little mirror set in brass that he valued a good deal; but seeing the barter going on, the spirit of business took hold of him, and he got out his treasure to see what he could do with it. The moment it was shown an eagerness to have it was manifested by several of the Indians who had furs to give in exchange. But Rae was in no hurry to strike a bargain. Holding the mirror up so that it flashed in the sun, he walked slowly around inviting bidders.

Some very good bear skins, and a pile of minx skins were offered him, but he shook his head until finally a stalwart young brave, taking him to one side, carefully unrolled a sea-otter skin the like of which Rae had never seen before. It was a beauty indeed, full five feet long, and in perfect condition, the fur being as smooth and even as velvet.

Rae did not hesitate a minute. Handing over the mirror he took up the skin, and made haste on board the *Beaver* for fear the Indian might change his mind. When Mr. Douglas saw his acquisition, and learned the cost of it, he exclaimed, —

“ Well, laddie, you’ve outdone us all. This skin is worth three of any of the others we’ve got. It’s fit for a prince. You must take good care of it, and it will buy you something fine in London when we send the furs over in the autumn.”

“I know just what I want too, sir,” said Rae, looking up archly.

“And what may that be, my son?” asked the chief factor.

“Why, a Manton rifle with silver all over the stock, like that gentleman had who was at Fort Vancouver last summer,” answered Rae.

Mr. Douglas laid back his head and laughed heartily.

“Upon my word,” he cried, “you are ambitious beyond a doubt. Nothing else will satisfy you but as fine a rifle as Governor Simpson’s. Well, well, what are we coming to? The younger generation must needs go far ahead of their fathers. Look here now, Rae, wouldn’t something more modest suit you equally as well?”

Quite taken aback by this outburst, which was entirely unexpected, for, having cherished the notion in his heart for a whole year, Rae had come to look upon it as something quite natural and proper on his part, he had nothing to say in his own defence, and the tears began to gather in his eyes, he being very sensitive to ridicule.

Noticing this, Mr. Douglas checked a bantering remark that was just upon his lips, and instead said in a soothing tone, —

“Never mind, Rae; there’s no harm in flying high, is there? If you can’t get just what you want in this world, it’s at least some compensation that you tried for it; and you certainly aren’t likely to fail for lack of trying.”

This turn to the subject materially relieved Rae’s feel-

ings, and it was not long before he was whistling merrily as he watched the crew getting ready to float the steamer off her sandy bed into deep water again. For the leak had been successfully mended, and the little *Beaver* was ready to resume her voyage northward.

The getting off proved a matter of some difficulty. Both anchors were carried out as far astern as possible, and while all on board except the engineer and his assistant heaved on the cables lustily, the engines were working full speed astern. For some minutes their joint efforts were of no avail. The steamer stayed fast, and concern lest she should prove a fixture began to be felt.

But Mr. Douglas did not share it. Ordering a rest to be taken, he spoke words of encouragement; and then calling upon the men to put forth their mightiest efforts, he himself lending his own enormous strength, there was a long pull, and a pull all together, with the result that amid a burst of cheers the *Beaver* slid slowly but steadily from off the sandbank into deep water, while Rae clapped his hands and danced a jig of joy on the poop.

They did not attempt to leave Nootka Sound until the following morning; and then with every prospect pleasing, and all the signs promising, the steamer headed northward for Fort Simpson. The voyage thither was marked by no special incident, yet was full of enjoyment to Rae. The weather being favorable all the way, he spent his time on deck or in the cross-trees, keeping a keen look-out for anything noteworthy.

He was always hoping to sight another whale; but al-

though he saw plenty of seals and porpoises, no whales came into view. Even if they had, it was not likely that Mr. Douglas would have sanctioned another hunt, if for no other reason, because too much time had been already lost, and no further delay could be risked.

The *Beaver* made only a short stay at Fort Simpson, and Rae had no time for a run ashore, which he rather regretted, as he had by that time been at sea long enough to hanker for a touch of the solid earth. But for this he had to wait until, having turned south once more, the steamer dropped down to Fort M'Laughlin on Milbank Sound.

As this fort was to be abandoned in favor of the new establishment at Camosun Bay, a stay of some days was necessary while the garrison with their belongings, and the stoves and stock of furs, were being got on board. Rae not being required to help was free to do what he pleased, and having in the course of the first day struck up an acquaintance with a bright young half-breed several years his senior who could speak English fluently, he was persuaded by him to venture on an expedition for which he omitted to ask Mr. Douglas's permission, and which came very near having serious consequences for himself.

CHAPTER IV.

IN DOUBTFUL COMPANY.

RAE'S new companion bore the unusual name of "Saucy Alec," for which he was indebted to his pert way of speaking. This habit had brought him into deep disfavor with his seniors and superiors. Indeed, but for his being the son of one of the most useful men at the fort, and having himself a more than ordinary share of skill as a hunter and fisherman, he would not have been allowed about Fort M'Laughlin at all. As it was, his presence was simply tolerated by the factor; and he lived a kind of outcast life that caused him to hail with delight the advent of a visitor who, knowing nothing of his dubious reputation, might be won over to companionship for a time at least.

Mr. Douglas being very much engrossed in the task of transferring on board the *Beaver* all that was worth taking away, had no time for Rae, and, having cautioned him to keep out of mischief, and not go far from the fort, left him to his own resources. For the first few hours the boy wandered about wondering what he should do with himself, and feeling much like a butterfly among a lot of busy

bees. To him came Saucy Alec, smiling his sweetest, and holding out a branch of the Indian pear-tree well laden with the reddish-black luscious fruit which the natives prize so highly.

“Are these for me?” asked Rae, his mouth watering at the sight of the berries, for they were the first he had seen that year.

“Yes, if you like them,” responded the half-breed.

“Oh, I do like them!” cried Rae. “I think they’re the best berries on the coast; don’t you?” and taking the branch he picked half-a-dozen of the tiny pears, and crammed them into his mouth.

Well pleased at the favor with which his offering was received, Alec stood smiling, while Rae gave himself up to the enjoyment of this unexpected treat too fully to resume the conversation until the branch was stripped bare. Then holding it in his hand, and regretting it did not have twice as many berries upon it, he smacked his lips and said,—

“I’m very much obliged to you; and—what’s your name?”

The half-breed’s face clouded over a little as he answered,—

“They all call me Saucy Alec; but it isn’t fair. I’m no worse than the others, though they do say I am. They treat me very badly, they do.”

Now there is no chord in a boy’s heart so readily touched as that of sympathy with those who complain of not getting fair play. The instinct of championship is at

once aroused, and a side is taken without the faintest thought of looking into the real facts to ascertain just who is in the wrong.

Rae had never before seen the boy who now sought his friendship; but he impulsively assumed that he was a much-injured individual, and was ready not only to take the truth of his story for granted, but to listen to anything he might suggest.

“Well, I won’t call you Saucy Alec, anyway,” said he, his countenance beaming with good-fellowship. “I like you too much already to call you such a name; I’ll just call you Alec — that will be all right, won’t it?” And as the other nodded assent, he added, “My name is Rae — Rae Finlayson. My father is to be factor of the new fort at Camosun Bay; and I’m here with Mr. Douglas, who is the chief factor of the company, you know.”

The half-breed’s eye opened at this. He had not imagined the new-comer was a person of such importance, and this increased his anxiety to establish a good footing with him. He was silent for a few moments as he racked his brain trying to think of something that would prove of special interest to Rae. Then his face lit up, and he asked eagerly, —

“Wouldn’t you like to see my otter?”

Rae’s eyes danced at the question.

“Oh, yes!” he exclaimed. “Where is it? Can you show it to me right away?”

Alec nodded expressively, and then, drawing near to Rae, said in a meaning whisper, —

“But you mustn’t let anybody know; it’s my secret.”

The fact of its existence being a secret of course served to intensify Rae’s curiosity, and he asked, —

“Is it near here? When will you take me to see it?”

“This afternoon,” responded Alec. “You see that point over there?” indicating with his finger a rocky projection on the shore about two hundred yards from where they stood. “You meet me there as soon as you get your dinner. My canoe is hidden there. And say,” he added, “have you got a gun of your own?”

“Of course,” answered Rae; “a fine little rifle.”

“Good!” said Alec; “bring it with you. You may get a shot at something.”

Arrangements being thus perfected, the boys parted to meet an hour later at the appointed rendezvous, Rae promising to keep the matter a secret.

On his way back to the *Beaver*, the first flush of excitement at meeting with Saucy Alec having passed off, Rae began to feel some twinges of conscience because of this promise. In the bottom of his heart he knew that he ought to ask permission of Mr. Douglas, whose charge he was, but — and here came the rub — he knew equally well that this permission would not be granted, and that he would be bidden to stay by the steamer.

Accordingly he had quite an argument with himself, which was not decided either way when the call came to dinner. As it chanced, Mr. Douglas was not in the cabin, nor did he appear until Rae had about finished, and then he seemed in such a hurry and so much pre-

occupied that the boy had no opportunity to address him, which made it easier for him to decide in favor of keeping silence, even although he was not altogether happy at the decision.

When dinner was over the men all returned to their work; and the coast thus being clear, no one questioned Rae when, taking his rifle, he set off for the place where he would meet the half-breed.

Alec was there awaiting him, and his tawny face lit up at his approach.

“You’ve kept your word,” said he, smiling until he showed a double row of teeth white and gleaming. “I was afraid perhaps you couldn’t come; and you’ve brought your gun. Let me see it, won’t you?”

Rae proudly handed him the rifle; and as his hand closed upon it there came into his countenance a look of wild desire that would have led a more observant person than Rae to be somewhat concerned as to its safety. But Rae had no suspicions. In the company of the half-breed he had also forgotten all his compunctions, and was resolved to enjoy himself to the best of his ability.

“Where is your canoe?” he asked by way of a hint, for Alec seemed disposed to spend a good deal of time over the rifle, fondling it much as a young girl might a new doll.

“Oh, just near here!” was the reply, uttered in a tone of indifference. Then, recollecting himself, Alec added more politely, “I hide it in a sort of cave, so that the other boys won’t meddle with it.”

"Come along, then, and let us get it," said Rae, who was impatient to be on the way to the otter.

With an expressive sigh, Alec handed back the rifle, and started off around the point, leaving Rae to follow as he might.

A cleft in the rock that Rae would have passed without noticing proved, on closer inspection, to be the opening into the cave in which Alec kept his canoe. This was a small but very stanch craft, cleverly fashioned out of a single log of white cedar, the gunwales inclining outwards so as to throw off the waves, and the bow and stern richly decorated with grotesque figures of men and animals.

How such a boy as Saucy Alec came into possession of so fine a canoe was a question that he might have found it troublesome to answer, but Rae never thought of asking it. His mind was wholly occupied with the novelty of the situation and the prospect of having some kind of an adventure before the day ended.

"Where are we going?" he inquired when they had taken their places in the canoe and begun paddling.

"Over to that island," answered Alec, pointing in a north-westerly direction to an island that rose above the waters of Milbank Sound, about two miles distant.

"What, so far as that?" exclaimed Rae in a tone of dismay. "Why, that's such a long way off."

An ugly look showed itself on the half-breed's face.

"You're not afraid to go, are you?" he said sneeringly.

“No, I’m not afraid,” he returned; “and I don’t want you to hint that I am. But it’s a long way to go in this little canoe, all the same.”

The fact of the matter was, Rae did not at all fear going out in the canoe, but he did fear being so late getting back that Mr. Douglas would want to know where he had been, and then the whole story would have to come out.

Realizing from the tone of Rae’s reply that he had gone too far, the half-breed sought to make answer by saying, —

“Oh, the canoe can stand anything; and you paddle so well we’ll get along very fast.”

This ingenious bit of flattery was well aimed; and his good humor being thereby thoroughly restored, Rae plied his paddle vigorously without further question.

The canoe rode the waves like a sea-gull, and propelled by the two paddles, glided onward at a rate of speed that brought it to its destination within an hour from the time of setting out.

The island was a wild, desolate-looking place, with a rocky shore and a scrubby twisted crown of trees. No human being, red or white, ever made his home there. Indeed, few others than the half-breed had visited it at any time, and this was the very reason he had chosen it for the purpose of keeping in secrecy one of the strangest pets that ever a boy had.

The moment he set foot on shore, Rae asked, —

“Where’s your otter? Let me see him right off, won’t you?”

Again a frown came over Alec's face. His companion's impatience irritated him. This was the first time he had revealed the existence of his pet, and he naturally wanted to make the most of it, whereas Rae sought to rush the business through in a way that would deprive it of much of its importance.

"Don't be in such a hurry," he replied rather gruffly. "I'll show him to you in a minute."

Feeling the rebuff, Rae said nothing more, but turned to look back towards the fort, and as he did there came over him a feeling of uneasiness that was due to his suddenly realizing what a distance separated him from his friends, and how completely he was in the hands of a young half-breed, of whom he knew nothing save what the lad had himself told him.

Immediately he wished himself back at the fort, and regretted that he had ever come away. Saucy Alec was a strange sort of a chap, and not at all a comfortable companion. He would certainly do his best to get back as quickly as possible.

While these thoughts were passing through his mind the half-breed had drawn the canoe up on the beach; and then, picking up Rae's rifle quite as if it had been his own, said pleasantly enough, —

"Come along, now; I'll show you my otter."

His curiosity reasserting itself, Rae dismissed his apprehensions and followed Alec up the rocky beach, and into the mass of trees which covered the upper part of the island. He wondered as he walked up if Alec kept his

pet among the trees, for that would be an odd place for a sea-otter; but he did not like to say so after the manner in which his first questions had been received. Plunging into the thick growth, Alec pursued a tortuous course, turning this way and that way for no apparent reason; the real truth, however, being that his purpose was to so confuse his companion that he could not possibly again find the way unassisted. In this he was so completely successful, that when, at the end of ten minutes, he came out on the beach not two hundred yards from where they had landed, Rae felt quite sure they were not less than a mile distant.

“Where on earth are we now?” he asked, looking blankly about him.

“Still on the island,” answered Alec with a sardonic grin.

“You needn’t tell me that,” responded Rae petulantly.

“I mean, how far from where we left the canoe.”

“Oh, never mind about that,” said Alec. “Come, I’ll show you the otter.” So saying he pulled aside some bushes which masked the mouth of a cave, and pointing to the narrow entrance, said, —

“Creep in there. I’ll come right after you.”

Rae did as directed, and found himself in a good-sized cave, well lit through a fissure in its roof, and having at the bottom a shining pool of sea-water, into which there had evidently just sprung an animal of some kind. It was a very romantic place, fit for the secret bower of a mermaid, and there came to Rae a feeling of exultation at being admitted to its recesses.

While he stood just inside the entrance watching the pool, the half-breed, who certainly had not followed as promptly as he promised, pulled himself in, and at once asked, —

“What do you think of my cave?”

“I think it’s just splendid,” replied Rae; “but,” looking all around, “where’s the otter? I don’t see it about.”

“Then you don’t know how to use your eyes,” said Alec, whose manners certainly had much need of mending.

As he spoke he climbed down to the edge of the pool, and gave a curious kind of cry resembling that of a sea-bird.

At once the still surface of the water was broken into ripples, in the midst of which appeared the head of the otter as the creature made its way to him from the other side of the pool.

“Don’t move a step,” called out Alec, noticing that Rae was about to approach him. “Kahlan can’t bear strangers. You’ll frighten him.”

Rae, who felt for the time completely in subjection to his companion, at once became motionless, and then had the pleasure of seeing what no white boy had ever seen before — a full-grown sea-otter in captivity, and at least partially tamed.

The animal swam up close to where the half-breed stood, and, the latter retreating a few steps and holding out a big sea-urchin, in its eagerness to get the echino-

derm it left the water altogether, thus giving Rae the opportunity of getting a perfect view of it.

It was a splendid specimen of its kind, the fur being in fine condition, and of a most lustrous softness, and ebony shimmering, and from the blunt, bewhiskered nose to the root of the short, stumpy tail the creature measured full four feet.

Now, young as he was, Rae had heard enough about the sea-otter, the most precious prize in the whole field of fur-hunting, to fully appreciate what he now said; and as the creature pounced eagerly upon the sea-urchin, and crunched it between his strong, flat molars, he exclaimed, with a sigh of admiration, —

“My, what a beauty! I wish he was mine. How did you catch him?”

Evidently well satisfied at the enthusiasm of his companion, Alec explained that one day he had chanced to espy this otter darting into the cave through an opening on the beach. At once he had set to work to block up the opening with boulders, and had then succeeded in making the animal a prisoner. This was in the early spring, and ever since he had been visiting it regularly, and keeping it supplied with clams, crabs, mussels, and sea-urchins, so that it had grown sleek in confinement. His idea was to keep it until the autumn, and then kill it, and sell its skin to the Hudson's Bay Company.

“Oh, but must you kill it?” Rae exclaimed; and then remembering the otter-skin he had on board the steamer,

he added, "But, of course, you must; that's the only way you can get anything for it."

Alec nodded by way of reply. He had been in a kind of brown study for a moment or two, from which he suddenly awoke with the question, —

"Look here, Rae, will you give me your rifle for the otter?"

Rae started, and the color came into his face. The half-breed looked so eager, and had already acted so strangely, that he shrank from saying "no." Yet he had no idea of assenting. He already possessed one otter skin, and if he let his rifle go it might be months before it could be replaced. There certainly was not another like it to be had north of San Francisco.

"That wouldn't be a fair exchange," he began diplomatically. "Your otter is worth half-a-dozen rifles like mine."

"Never you mind that," returned Alec, a hard look coming into his face that increased Rae's uneasiness. "I want the rifle; and if I'm willing to give more than its worth, that's my business and not yours."

"Well, I'm sorry I can't oblige you," said Rae, hesitatingly; "but, really, I mustn't swap my rifle for anything. My father gave it to me as a present on my last birthday, and he would be very cross with me if I were to part with it."

While he was speaking the half-breed's face had been growing darker and more determined. Rae's opposition only increased instead of diminishing his resolution to have

his own way, and he took on so forbidding an expression that Rae moved towards the cave's mouth, wishing to the bottom of his heart that he was on the other side of the narrow opening.

Alec's keen eyes observed the movement, and with a bound he sprang up between Rae and the exit.

"No you don't," he snapped through his clenched teeth. "You're not going to get away from here until you do what I want."

Thoroughly alarmed, he threw up his right arm as though to ward off a blow.

"Oh, you needn't be so frightened," sneered Alec. "I'm not going to strike you, but I am going to have your gun."

"But I don't want your otter," pleaded Rae, his voice sinking into a sob as he saw how completely he was at the half-breed's mercy.

"I don't care anything about that. You needn't take him if you don't want him," broke in Alec roughly — "and now that I come to think of it, I won't let you have it anyway; but I'll take your rifle, all the same."

Rae leaned back against the wall of the cave, while a sense of helplessness came over him so strongly that only by the utmost effort could he restrain the tears that filled his eyes. He could not bring himself to surrender his beloved rifle. If Alec took it he would have to do it by force, not with his assent.

The half-breed evidently realized this, for, as if weary of the argument, and determined to put an end to it, he gave Rae a look that was little short of murderous in its menace.



"With a sudden spring he dived through the mouth of the cave."

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“Stay here now until I give you the word to come out. If you dare to move I’ll stick this into you,” he declared, drawing from his belt a long, keen hunting-knife. Then, with a sudden spring, he dived through the mouth of the cave, leaving Rae white and trembling with apprehension.

“Stay where you are!” he shouted again as, snatching up the rifle, he plunged into thick undergrowth, and vanished.

For some minutes after he had disappeared Rae remained inside the cave. Then, taking courage from the silence without, he cautiously climbed into the open air, and looked anxiously around him. There was no trace of the half-breed, and, owing to the ingeniously twisted and doubled way in which he had led Rae to the cave, the latter was entirely at a loss as to his present position.

He could see nothing of the fort. He must therefore be on the other side of the island from that where they had landed, and the first thing for him to do was undoubtedly to make his way with as little loss of time as possible to the canoe. Unhappily, in his bewilderment, when setting out to do this he turned to the right instead of to the left as he should have done, and the consequence was that he had to make the circuit of the greater part of the island. He dared not trust himself to find a path through the trees without Alec’s aid, so he stuck close to the shore, and this being made up of slippery boulders, prevented his moving anything like speedily.

“Oh dear!” he groaned as he toiled over his difficult, and in places dangerous, road. “I do wish I hadn’t

come here with that wild fellow. There's no knowing what he'll do for the sake of getting my rifle. He may go off in the canoe and leave me here alone."

This last thought was so appalling that Rae stopped to gather strength to bear up against it. What would he do if he were really deserted by the half-breed on the lonely island? What indeed could he do? His rifle having been taken, his only weapon was the hunting-knife which hung in his belt. He had seen no wild animals, yet there might be a panther lurking in the depths of the wood, or a pack of wolves only waiting for darkness to spring upon him.

Terrified as never before in his life, Rae resumed his toilsome march, more than once getting a nasty fall as he sprang from boulder to boulder, and narrowly escaping a sprained ankle. At last, weary and breathless, he reached the end of the island nearest the fort. One glance in that direction was sufficient to tell the story. Already a full half mile from shore, and dancing swiftly over the waves at the bidding of Alec's strenuous paddle, was the canoe, every moment increasing the distance that separated it from him.

The half-breed had fulfilled his sinister threat in the way Rae most dreaded, and the poor boy was alone on the island, with the evening shadows already beginning to darken about him.

CHAPTER V.

BACK TO FORT CAMOSUN.

IT would be very unjust to Rae to deem him unmanly, because when he fully realized his situation he sat down upon a boulder and burst into tears. Looked at in any possible light, his position was an extremely trying one. Even though he and the otter were the only living creatures on the island, so that he had nothing to fear in the way of attack, he was utterly without food and shelter for the night, while there was no certainty of relief on the morrow.

Search would, of course, be made for him by Mr. Douglas as soon as he was missed; but who would put the searchers on the right track? His setting forth with the half-breed had perhaps been observed by no one, and "Saucy Alec" would assuredly take good care not to let it be known, if indeed he showed himself in the vicinity of the fort again until the steamer had gone.

While these thoughts were chasing one another through the boy's distracted brain, the darkness was coming on apace, and presently its soft folds silently enveloped him as, having dried his unavailing tears, he peered eagerly in

the direction of the fort in the faint hope that even yet succor might come to him.

The top of the hard boulder made a poor couch upon which to spend the night, so he cautiously crept up into the fringe of the trees, then throwing himself down with his back against a smooth trunk, and his face toward the fort, prepared to pass the long hours of darkness as best he might.

In the meanwhile what were they doing on board the *Beaver*? When supper time came without bringing Rae, who was usually so prompt at meals, his appetite having an unfailing vigor, Mr. Douglas naturally began to ask as to his whereabouts. Getting no satisfaction from those around him, he promptly despatched a couple of the men to the fort to make inquiry there.

They fulfilled their commission faithfully enough; but they returned without any definite information, whereupon Mr. Douglas, becoming quite concerned, set off himself, determined to sift the matter to the bottom. His insistent inquiries at first, however, met with no better result, and he was about to return to the steamer in considerable anxiety of mind, when an old woman came up to him, and said in a hesitating way, —

“May you be looking for the white boy, sir?”

“That’s just what I’m doing,” responded Mr. Douglas. “Do you know anything about him?”

“I’m thinking I saw him go off in a canoe with Saucy Alec,” said the old woman with a look that implied more than Mr. Douglas understood, and caused him to ask in his most imperious way, —

“And who is Saucy Alec, pray? I never heard of the gentleman before.”

There were many answers vouchsafed to this question by those standing around, from which Mr. Douglas gathered that Rae's choice of a companion had not shown much discretion, and that it would be well for him to inquire very closely into what had become of the two lads.

It was too late to accomplish anything beyond inquiry that night; but by dint of persistent questioning Mr. Douglas did elicit the facts that Rae and the half-breed had been seen in a canoe paddling up the sound, and had not been known to return.

Mr. Douglas accordingly went back to the steamer, determined to institute a thorough search for the missing boy the first thing in the morning, and, when he found him, as he felt perfectly confident he would do, to give him such a lecture as would teach him to take better care of himself for the future.

And now to return to Rae, compelled to pass a lonely vigil on the desolate island, which, for aught he knew, might number among its denizens a hungry panther, or perchance a fierce catamount.

“Oh, if I were only back on board the *Beaver!*” he cried as he gazed longingly seawards. “What a fool I was to trust that rascal of a half-breed. It just serves me right, it does. I had no business to go off without asking Mr. Douglas's leave.” At this he paused for a moment, and then went on, “If I had asked him he

wouldn't have let me come — that's certain! and so I wouldn't have got into this trouble. Oh dear! If I ever get safe back I'll never, never do it again."

Poor Rae! he was receiving a sharp lesson on the truth that good resolutions are of little use in mending matters after the harm has been done. The time they are of service is before the temptation has carried the day.

In his desperate loneliness the boy's thoughts now turned heavenwards. He was wont to say his prayers with tolerable regularity, the good habit having been begun before his mother's death, and continued in obedience to his father's wishes. But it was in a very mechanical way, being little more than the repetition of a number of phrases learned by rote, and murmured over without much attention to meaning.

Never before had Rae really felt the need of prayer; but it came upon him now, and falling on his knees at the foot of the tree he prayed for protection and deliverance with all his heart.

He was easier in his mind after this, and in a little while managed to fall asleep, the night air being free from chill. He had been asleep some hours when suddenly an ear-piercing cry rang through the shadowy stillness, and caused him to spring to his feet trembling with terror.

Were his worst fears well founded? Did panthers have their lair upon the island? and had they discovered his presence? In his first fright he made a frantic effort to climb the tree at whose base he had been sleeping; but there were no limbs within reach of his hands,

and the trunk was far too big for him to clasp his arms around it.

He could not run away, for it was too dark to see a yard ahead. He had no other alternative than to stay where he was, and hope for the best.

Presently the cry rang out again, this time nearer at hand, but instead of being still more terrified, Rae broke into a laugh.

“Well, if I’m not a goose,” he said aloud; “it’s nothing but an old screech-owl after all. If I hadn’t been asleep, it wouldn’t have frightened me like that, I’m sure.”

He was now too thoroughly awake to get to sleep again, so he made shift as best he could to while away the long hours, until at last, just as in very weariness his eyes were once more beginning to grow heavy, the first streaks of dawn showed themselves along the eastern horizon, and all thought of further sleep was banished.

Faint with hunger, but full of hope, he set himself to watch for the boat which he confidently counted upon coming to his relief, although how Mr. Douglas would discover his whereabouts was a question he had not attempted to answer to himself.

The sun had risen high in the heavens before there appeared any indication of his faith being justified; and his heart was growing sick with deferred hope when his eye caught the flash of oars in the sunlight, and to his joy he descried a boat making its way along the southern shore of the sound.

“There it is!” he cried, dancing about and waving his hat, although there was no possibility of his being seen from the boat. “That’s Mr. Douglas. I knew he’d come after me. Oh, I wish I could make him see me!”

Going out to the end of the point he shouted and swung his hat, and tried in every way possible to attract the attention of those on board the boat. But all in vain. They were over a mile distant; and, moreover, by Mr. Douglas’s directions, they were closely scanning the southern shore of the sound, as his purpose was to go along that side for some distance, and then cross to the northern shore, and examine it for traces of the missing boy.

Rae’s heart sank as the boat went on past him.

“Oh dear, oh dear!” he groaned. “They didn’t see me, and they couldn’t see me, and they’ll go back to the steamer without finding me.”

Yet he kept his eyes fixed upon the boat, until it had almost vanished in the distance, and then a ray of hope came from seeing it change its course to the northern shore of the sound.

“Perhaps it’ll come nearer on its way back,” he said, taking comfort from the idea; and hastening to the other side of the island, he chose a projecting point, upon which he stationed himself, with his coat in his hands ready for use as a flag of distress when the right moment came.

After what seemed a painfully long wait, the boat reappeared creeping down the north shore, and the instant it

was within range Rae resumed his efforts to attract the attention of its occupants — shouting with all the strength of his lungs, and waving the coat to and fro in a frantic fashion.

This time, happily, his efforts were crowned with success. Mr. Douglas, happening to turn his keen glance from the shore out over the sound, caught sight of the little figure dancing about on the top of a big boulder.

“Hey! — what’s that?” he exclaimed, shading his eyes with his right hand so as to get a better look. “There’s Rae, for sure, signalling to us with all his might. Give way, men! He’s out on the island yonder. Who’d ever have thought of finding him there?”

Rae’s dance of anxiety changed to one of joy as he saw the boat turn and come straight toward him.

“Hurrah!” he shouted. “They’ve seen me at last. It’s all right. Hurrah! hurrah!”

In a few minutes the boat was at the beach, and Mr. Douglas springing ashore, took hold of Rae with both hands, not to embrace him, although that was really what he felt in his heart like doing, but to give him a good shaking in well-assumed anger.

“You young scapegrace!” he exclaimed, “is this where I find you? How came you here, and what have you got to say for yourself going off without my leave, and having to be hunted up like this?”

Rae was too glad and grateful for being hunted up to attempt to make any excuse for himself.

“I’ve nothing to say for myself, sir,” he replied. “I did wrong in going off with ‘Saucy Alec.’ But please forgive me, won’t you, Mr. Douglas? I won’t do such a thing again; indeed I won’t.”

There could be no doubt as to the spirit of sincere penitence in which he spoke, and Mr. Douglas’s tone was much less severe as he said, —

“Oh! of course you’re sorry enough now, and wish you hadn’t done it. But you know the best time to get sorry is before you get into mischief, and the most of times you won’t get into it at all.”

“I’m sure I wish I hadn’t got into it this time,” said Rae, with a rueful countenance, “for it’s cost me my beautiful gun.”

“Cost you your beautiful gun!” echoed Mr. Douglas in a tone of surprise. “What do you mean? Tell me about it.”

As Rae told his story the chief factor’s indignation blazed high.

“The scoundrel!” he cried hotly. “The dirty thieving half-breed rascal! I’ll make him sweat for this if it takes me a week to catch him. Jump in the boat, and we’ll get back to the fort as quickly as possible.”

Rae was just about to obey when he thought of the otter in the cave.

“Oh! but the otter,” he exclaimed. “We won’t leave the otter, will we? It’s mine now, you know.”

Mr. Douglas hesitated for a moment. “Is it worth waiting to get?” he asked.

“Indeed it is, sir,” responded Rae. “Just come and see him.”

With some reluctance, for he was impatient to be off, Mr. Douglas called a couple of the men, and they followed Rae to the curious cave, where they found the creature disporting itself in the central pool.

It was with considerable difficulty that they were enabled to catch it unhurt and get it to the boat, but they finally succeeded; and once this was accomplished, the chief factor gave orders to return to the fort with all speed.

On reaching there he at once summoned the veteran hunters and trappers, Indians and half-breeds, and offered a reward that made their eyes gleam fiercely for the capture of Saucy Alec, and the recovery of Rae's gun. He was not to be injured in any way, but to be brought to him for punishment. The hunters and trappers at once set out with a vigor that boded ill for the half-breed in spite of his head-start. They knew he would not go far inland, but would remain somewhere in hiding until the departure of the steamer, and then come forth to flaunt his ill-gotten booty with impunity, as the *Beaver* might never revisit Milbank Sound.

Two days passed before anything was heard of the fugitive, and then the most expert of the hunters returned bearing Rae's rifle uninjured, but without the half-breed. He explained that he had got upon Saucy Alec's trail, and run him down the previous evening just as he was preparing his supper. He came upon him so

suddenly as to get possession of the gun, which had been placed against a tree, before the half-breed discovered his presence, and then, realizing his powerlessness, he had dashed off into the depths of the forest without attempting to show fight. The hunter had followed him until it was too dark to proceed, and then made his way back to the fort, content with having accomplished at least one-half his mission.

Mr. Douglas was so pleased at the recovery of the rifle that he gave the successful hunter the full reward, much to the delight of the veteran, who had not expected such liberal compensation.

"There now, Rae," said the chief factor, handing the rifle back to its owner, who fondled it as a girl would her favorite doll. "You have your beautiful rifle again, and I hope you'll take better care of it henceforth. You've come out of this scrape pretty well, I think, for now you've got the otter too, whose pelt will be worth a good deal if you can manage to keep him alive until next winter. It's worth your trying, at all events."

"I'll do my best, sir," answered Rae, "to take care of both my rifle and the otter, and I hope I'll never give you so much trouble again."

The *Beaver* having by this time completed taking on board all that was to be removed from Fort M'Laughlin, Mr. Douglas yielded to the request of some of the younger members of his party that a bonfire might be made of the dismantled buildings. As soon as night came the torch was applied in different places, and soon stockade, store-

house, and dwelling were in flames, presenting a fine picture to those on board the steamer.

Rae watched the conflagration with intense interest. Every boy dearly loves a blaze, and this was the finest he had ever seen in his life, and yet all the time he was enjoying it he felt certain qualms of regret that such strong, solid buildings should go up in smoke.

“Oh dear!” he sighed, speaking to himself. “It does seem a pity for those houses to be burned up like that. They might have been given to the Indians who are going to stay here all the time.”

Mr. Douglas, who was standing near by, overheard this speech, and said in reply to it, —

“And what do you think the Indians would do with the buildings if we did let them have them?”

“Live in them, I suppose, sir,” responded Rae, feeling a little abashed at being overheard.

“Not a bit of it, Rae,” returned the chief factor. “They very much prefer their own tents. What they’d do would be to use the buildings as wood-piles in winter, and they’d not be bothered cutting a tree down for fire-wood until the buildings were burned down to the last stick.”

His mind made easier by this explanation, Rae gave his whole attention to the brilliant spectacle before him, and presently he saw in silhouette against the glowing background a form that he at once felt sure could be none other than that of the rascally half-breed.

He immediately called Mr. Douglas’s attention to it.

“That’s Saucy Alec,” he said. “I’m sure of it; and see, he’s dancing about and shaking his fist at us. He’s mad because we’ve got his otter, and he hasn’t got my gun.”

“He’ll be madder still if I can lay my hands upon him,” said Mr. Douglas, beckoning to some of his men to come to him. “I’ll give him a taste of the cat-o-nine-tails that he won’t forget in a hurry.”

A few moments later a boat shot quietly out from behind the *Beaver*, and rowed rapidly shoreward. At first the half-breed did not seem to notice it, and he continued his insolent gestures of defiance, but just as the boat touched the beach his eye fell upon it. Instantly he stopped his dance, and drew himself together in readiness for a spring. Then as the men sent after him made a dash to seize him he darted away like a startled hare, and went bounding off into the darkness with a defiant laugh that could be heard above the roar and crackle of the flames, and that was the last Rae saw of Saucy Alec.

The following morning the *Beaver* steamed out of Milbank Sound, and turned southward on the way back to Camosun Bay. The business for which he had made the trip having been completed, Mr. Douglas’s thoughts now began to be exercised concerning the new fort in process of erection.

“I wonder how fast they’ve got on since we left,” he said to Rae. “Your father ’ll do his best to hurry them up, I know; but he hasn’t many men to help him, and those Indians didn’t seem to take kindly to work.”

“Indeed they didn’t, sir,” answered Rae, “and they

seemed kind of sulky, some of them, as if they weren't any too well pleased at the fort being built."

"Did they?" inquired Mr. Douglas in a tone of keen interest. "I didn't notice anything of the kind myself. Tell me what makes you think that."

Rae in response told of some things he had seen, which caused him to look grave, and to shake his head, saying, "I don't quite like the look of that." After a moment's silence, he gave Rae one of his quick penetrating glances, and added, "You've a sharp pair of eyes, my boy, and you use them to good purpose. What you've told me is very important, and I want you when we get back to just be on the look-out for anything of the same kind, and to let me know of it at once. We may have some trouble with the Indians before we get our fort thoroughly established. I'd much prefer not to have a row with them; but if we do, I'm bound to give them a lesson they'll be in no hurry to forget."

No special incident marked the return voyage, the weather being prosperous, and the sturdy little *Beaver* panting and puffing steadily through the glistening waves until she rounded the cape into Juan de Fuca Strait, and pressed on for Camosun Bay, where she arrived in the afternoon just in time to fire off her gun as a salute to the setting sun.

Almost before the anchor dropped, Mr. Finlayson was alongside in a canoe, and springing on board caught Rae in his arms to give him a parental hug that fairly squeezed the breath out of the boy.

“Safe and sound!” he cried exultantly. “Mr. Douglas has taken good care of my laddie. Oh, but I’m glad to have you back again!”

Rae was no less glad than his father at their reunion, and wanted to begin at once to tell him of his adventures; but Mr. Douglas now claimed the attention of his chief subordinate, and Rae had to content himself with the promise of his father’s society so soon as the chief factor could spare him.

Considerable progress in the construction of the fort had been made during the *Beaver’s* absence, but a great deal yet remained to be done, and Mr. Douglas ordered all hands to help to the utmost of their ability, that no time might be lost in rendering the place thoroughly defensible.

There was a good reason for this, as from the country round about, and the contiguous mainland, the natives were flocking in to see what was going on, and were encamping on every side as though they meant to stay. They all seemed well-armed, but had not brought their wives or children along, which circumstance the fort-builders regarded with suspicion.

The latter now numbered fifty men in all, armed to the teeth, and constantly on guard against surprise, so that the Indians, even if thus disposed, would not be in a hurry to venture an attack.

They did, however, seize every opportunity for pilfering any article that came within their reach, and it was not safe for one of the workers to lay aside a tool for an instant. Axes, hatchets, saws, and hammers acquired a

most provoking habit of disappearing, and at times Mr. Douglas got so irritated by this petty thieving that it required all his powers of self-control to keep him from calling the Indians to summary account.

This, however, would have been the worst possible policy to pursue, as not only for the sake of the safety of the fort, but in the interests of trade, it was most necessary to maintain as friendly relations as possible with the natives; and so the stalwart chief factor bottled up his wrath towards them, relieving himself by giving vent to it when with Mr. Finlayson he smoked his evening pipe on the deck of the *Beaver*.

Yet, in spite of these difficulties, under his vigorous direction the work went steadily on, until at last, three months after the return of the *Beaver* from her northern trip, the stockade with bastions at the angles, and dwellings and store-houses inside, was completed; and in the month of October, Mr. Douglas pronounced the new establishment capable of taking care of itself.

A few days later, amid long and lusty cheers from those left behind, the *Beaver* with the chief factor on board took her noisy departure, Rae standing on the top of the highest bastion of the fort, and sending off blank charges in quick succession from his rifle in token of farewell. He was sorry to say good-bye to the steamer. He felt somehow as if they would be safer at the fort with her in the harbor. But he was not one to borrow trouble, and he much preferred staying at the new establishment to returning to Fort Vancouver.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ATTACK ON THE FORT.

FORT CAMOSUN when completed was a decidedly imposing structure. It stood on the east side of the inlet, directly opposite the chief village of the Songhies, which was distant some four hundred yards. It was in the form of a square, each side measuring one hundred and fifty yards, and being composed of cedar pickets twenty feet in height; while at the north-east and south-west angles rose octagonal bastions to a height of thirty feet, from whose parapets half-a-dozen cannon pointed menacingly. Inside the square were the stores, five in number, the blacksmith's shop, the dining-hall, and chapel. Then there were the powder-magazine, the men's barracks, and the residence of Mr. Finlayson, which had a corner all to itself.

A remarkable thing about the construction of the fort was that, extensive and impregnable, at least to Indians, as it appeared, not a single iron nail had been used. Houses, bastions, and palisades alike were put together simply with wooden pegs, and the many years that they stood intact bear testimony to the thoroughness of the work at the beginning.

When on the completion of the fort the *Beaver* steamed away to Fort Nisqually, it was for the purpose of making one more trip, and this time her cargo consisted mainly of cattle, so that the new settlers might not lack for milk and butter. These cattle were of Mexican origin, and so wild and unmanageable that the saying, "As wild as a steer," might have arisen from the way they behaved.

As soon as they got their hoofs on shore they broke away from their guardians, and with heads and tails erect darted hither and thither, scaring the Indians, who had never seen any creatures of the kind before, and knocking down half-a-dozen women and children before plunging into the thicket, where they vanished from sight.

This happened late in the afternoon, so no effort was made to go after them then, but the following morning Mr. Finlayson gave orders for a "round-up" of the run-aways. Great was Rae's glee at the announcement. Here would be fine fun indeed. There were no deer in the neighborhood of the fort to hunt, but the cattle would for the time provide a tolerable substitute; and although they could not be shot, yet they had to be caught and driven back to the fort, and there would be lots of excitement doing that.

In this expectation he was not disappointed. Bright and early the recovering party set out. When Mr. Finlayson saw Rae making preparations to join it he was at first inclined to demur, not that he had any fear of harm from the cattle, but rather from the Indians, in whom he had not yet come to place much confidence.

“Are you going too, Rae?” he asked, as he saw his son buckling on his belt, in which hung his hunting-knife, and throwing his powder-flask over his shoulders.

“To be sure I am, father,” responded Rae, “if you’ve no objections. Ogden says he’ll be glad to have my help, and I think it will be great fun.”

The father cogitated for a moment. His intense affection for Rae made him reluctant to have the boy out of his sight any more than he could help. Yet he realized that to yield to this feeling would be very unfair to his son, who would ere long have to fight his own battles unaided, and who could learn to take proper care of himself only by being given proper freedom of action.

“Did Ogden say he wanted you, Rae?” he asked, more for the sake of delaying his consent than for any other reason.

“Yes, indeed he did,” replied Rae eagerly. “He said I’d be as good as a man to help corral the cattle.”

“Well, then,” said Mr. Finlayson, “will you stick close by Ogden, so that if anything happens he can look after you?”

“Certainly, father, if you want me to,” was the prompt answer.

“Very well then, my boy, you can go,” said the father; “but remember keep Ogden in sight, and don’t let one of these crazy creatures get its horns into you, and keep a keen eye for the Indians. They might try some mischief.”

Ogden was the next in authority to Mr. Finlayson — a

great stalwart Englishman, devoted to the interests of the Hudson Bay Company, and on the sure road to a factorship at no distant day. He took a great interest in Rae, and Mr. Finlayson knew that the boy was as safe under his care as in his own. Nevertheless had he only himself to consider in the matter he would have kept Rae back, for he was his only son, and upon him he concentrated the love he had borne for the wife and mother whose grave lay in the little burying-ground at Fort Vancouver.

The rounding-up party comprised ten of the smartest men in the garrison, and Mr. Ogden and Rae made up the dozen. They set forth on foot for two good reasons. In the first place, the forest was so dense, and the ground so uneven, that horses would have been useless; and, in the second place, the only horses they possessed had stampered with the rest of the cattle, and were roaming wild with them.

They all carried their guns and hunting-knives, and, lest they might have to remain out over night, sufficient provisions to last over the next day. A merrier party never started. They had been toiling hard for months constructing the fort, and this was their first holiday. That it would prove mere pastime they never doubted.

The errant animals would not have gone very far, and the task of driving them back could hardly be a difficult one.

Rae strode along at the head of the party beside Mr. Ogden, whistling gaily, and skipping about in the fulness of his joy.

“Just wait till I sight that red steer with the white face and the big horns,” he said; “I’ll make him jump, I promise you. Did you see the way he knocked that little girl over yesterday? He wants to be taught good manners.”

“Perhaps you won’t find the critters so easy to manage as you think, Rae,” said Mr. Ogden with a smile. “They may turn Tartar on us, and give us lots of trouble.”

“Oh! I guess we’ll be a match for them if they do,” responded Rae, who had no lack of self-confidence.

Chatting together and chaffing one another, the men pushed further and further into the forest, which was pretty dense, although the trees did not rise to a great height. They found traces of the objects of their search, but for a long time got no glimpse of the cattle themselves. In fact, it was close to mid-day before the foremost of the party, a bright young trapper who had the sharpest eyes in the band, stopped suddenly, and pointing to the right, said in an undertone, —

“There they are; but let us go easy, or we’ll scare them.”

Mr. Ogden at once divided his men into two sections, one to go to the right and the other to the left, so as to surround the herd from the rear, and creeping forward as silently as possible, they thus drew near the unsuspecting cattle.

The arrangement seemed to succeed admirably, and Mr. Ogden was just about to give the signal to close in

upon the animals, and get them herded together, when the very steer of which Rae had spoken, lifting its head in a startled way, gave a loud bellow and bounded off, steering straight for where Rae stood.

Now had it not been for his boast about teaching this creature better manners, Rae would have been disposed to let him have a wide berth, but in view of his speech he felt bound to oppose his passing as best he could, so standing his ground bravely, he swung his rifle and shouted at the top of his voice.

But the red steer, which really seemed possessed of a devil of some kind, neither stopped nor swerved in its course. With horns lowered and tail uplifted on it came, in spite of Rae's frantic efforts. The rest of the party were too busy looking after the other cattle to observe the boy's danger, and before any of them had a chance to interfere the steer had caught him on his horns.

"Good heavens! he'll be killed," cried Mr. Ogden, fully expecting to see him tossed in the air.

But such was not the case. Instead of being flung into space, Rae was seen to be holding on tight to the creature's head, and to be thus borne along as it continued its mad career.

"Head him off! stop him! stop him!" shouted Mr. Ogden, thoroughly alarmed at the boy's perilous plight, and dashing after him himself at a rate that was most creditable for a man of his age, while the other men who were within sight followed his example.

Of course, the more they shouted and the faster they

ran, the more terrified the steer became, and considering the handicap Rae's weight upon his head must have been, it was certainly surprising what speed he developed. In this exciting fashion the chase continued for full a hundred yards, and as Rae held on like grim death, and the steer's strength showed no signs of slackening, there was no telling how much longer it would have been kept up had not the intervention of a deep narrow gully brought it to a sudden termination.

Hanging on in the way he was, Rae's body blinded the eyes of his strange steed, so that the creature could have no notion of what was ahead. Consequently, when he came to the gully, instead of swerving aside, he plunged plump in with such a terrible force as to nearly break his neck, and to completely break one of his fore-legs, while his unwilling jockey was sent flying against the opposite bank so violently as to deprive him of both breath and senses.

When Mr. Ogden rushed up panting, and trembling with apprehension, he found the steer struggling in helpless agony in the bottom of the gully ; and a few yards above, on a kind of ledge, lay Rae, to all appearance dead.

"God help us !" he exclaimed, "the boy's done for, I believe."

Leaping recklessly into the gully, he scrambled up beside Rae, and lifted his head with his left hand, placing the right over his heart. Immediately his countenance brightened.

"He's not dead," he cried in a tone of vast relief;

“he’s only winded, maybe. Oh! I hope there are no bones broken.”

By this time a couple of the other men had come up, and with their aid Rae was tenderly lifted out of the gully, and placed at the foot of a tree on a bank of moss while one hurried off to a spring near by for water.

When this was dashed in his face Rae revived, and opening his eyes looked around in a dazed way.

“What’s happened?” he asked faintly, and then with a groan of pain, “Oh, my head!” As he made to put his hand up to it he gave another groan, “My arm! what’s the matter with my arm? It hurts dreadfully.”

Then he lost consciousness again, and looked as if it really was all over with him.

“Poor little chap!” said Mr. Ogden feelingly, “he’s had a bad shaking up. But I guess it’s not much worse. Well, we’ll have to leave those cattle alone for to-day, and get the boy back to the fort as quickly as possible. His father knows a good deal about doctoring, and he’ll fix him up.”

So with their hunting-knives they cut down a lot of boughs, and lashing them together, made quite a comfortable stretcher, on which Rae was placed, and borne off carefully. They had not gone far before his senses came back to him; but his head ached so fiercely and his whole body was so full of pain that he felt no disposition to talk, but lay quietly on the stretcher doing his best to stifle the groans that would well up to his lips, for his sufferings were really severe.

Mr. Finlayson, who had been standing on the top of one of the bastions, looking out for the return of the cattle, caught sight of the little procession as soon as it emerged from the forest, and at once hastened down to meet it, his face full of concern.

“What’s happened, Ogden?” he demanded on getting within ear-shot. “Where’s Rae? Whom have you got there?”

“It’s Rae, sir,” replied Mr. Ogden; “but don’t be alarmed. He’s only been shaken up by a fall. He’ll be all right presently.”

When Rae heard his father’s voice, he raised himself with great difficulty, and turning a pale face in that direction, managed to murmur, “You mustn’t be frightened, father; I’m hurt a good deal, but I’ll get over it soon.”

Going up to the stretcher, Mr. Finlayson took Rae’s face between his hands, and pressed a fervent kiss upon his forehead, saying soothingly, —

“You’ll tell me all about it after a while, Rae; come along now, and we’ll try and find out how badly you’re damaged.”

He did not want the others to see how much he was disturbed by the manner of his son’s return, and taking comfort from the cheering tone of his voice, put a brave face on the matter for the present.

On Rae being carefully examined, it was found that his right arm had been badly strained, and there were a number of painful contusions on different parts of his body,

but otherwise he had escaped injury save from the effects of the shock, which might linger for a while.

Mr. Finlayson was immensely relieved on there being no more serious consequences.

“You’ve come off remarkably well, my boy,” he said, “considering the circumstances. I must have that brute of a steer looked after at once, or the Indians will do it for me. You’ll have the satisfaction of dining off him, Rae, in revenge for the scurvy way he treated you. But look here, Rae, what am I to do with you? So sure as you get out of my sight you have an adventure of some kind; and although your good luck has carried you through thus far, who knows when it will fail you, and then—well, I don’t like to think of what that would mean.”

“But, father,” replied Rae with a quizzical sort of smile, “you wouldn’t have me stay round all the time, and do nothing, would you? I’ve got to learn to look after myself, you know, and the sooner I do it the better, I suppose.”

“That’s so, my boy, that’s so,” assented Mr. Finlayson. “I can’t be with you always.” Then throwing up his head as though to dismiss the subject, he added, “Oh! well, let it go. It’s no use borrowing trouble. You’ll just have to take your chances as I did at your age.”

“Of course I will, father,” returned Rae, “and that’s just what I want to do. At the same time, I promise you I’m not going to run any more risks than I can help. I want to live to be an old man, and perhaps I’ll be the

factor of a fort some day, as you are now, father," and he gave Mr. Finlayson a look of fond pride that went straight to the factor's heart.

"God grant you may, my boy," exclaimed Mr. Finlayson fervently. "There are many lots in life far worse than a Hudson's Bay factor, and I would like to think of you filling that post in due time."

Bruised and battered as he had been, Rae's superb constitution quickly threw off the effects, and at the end of a week he was out again as lively as ever, and ready for the next adventure.

In the meantime, the stray cattle had all been hunted up, and securely corralled until they should learn to behave better, and prove more worthy of being trusted. Then began the task of breaking in the oxen for use as draught animals, a process the Indians watched with profound surprise and interest, not altogether free from contempt.

"What new species of game was this that the white men had brought to the island," they asked one another, "and which, instead of being killed and eaten, was being carefully tamed to do the women's work?"

Here, certainly, was a wonder in its way, and rather a disturbing one too, for not only was the game being diverted from its proper purpose, but it was depreciating the worth of wives, since, if the work that rightfully ought to be done by the women was done by these big animals, why then, of course, the former would so fall in value that the possessor of six or ten would find himself a poorer man than he imagined.

Arguing from these premises, the Indians were not long in coming to the conclusion that the white intruders needed to be taught that their innovation was not welcomed by the original inhabitants. Now, among those encamped in the vicinity of the fort was a band of Cowichans, whose chief was Tsoughilam, and who had come down from the north on a plundering expedition. The cattle of the fort-builders offered a magnificent prey for these brigands, particularly the work animals, which were finer, fatter, and more easily approached than the others, it being the practice to turn all the cattle out to graze in the daytime, and to corral them at night.

As it chanced, one afternoon that Rae was strolling about on the edge of the forest looking for a shot at some bird, he caught sight of a party of Cowichans cautiously separating a couple of fat oxen from the herd, and driving them toward their own camp.

Suspecting some mischief, he followed them at a safe distance until he felt quite sure what their purpose was, then he hurried back to the fort at the top of his speed. He had some difficulty in finding his father, Mr. Finlayson having gone off along shore to a considerable distance; but when he heard his son's report he made all haste to return, and as soon as he arrived called a score of the men to take their rifles and accompany him to the Cowichan camp.

It was altogether against his policy to have any open rupture with the Indians, as that would defeat the main object for which Fort Camosun was built, to wit, the

establishing of a profitable trade in peltries ; yet they must be taught to respect the rights of property, and to leave the cattle alone.

By the time the camp was reached, the cattle had been slaughtered, and the Indians were having a glorious feast. Calling for the chief, Mr. Finlayson demanded payment for the slain animals. Instead of complying, Tsoughilam attempted to argue the matter.

“What !” he exclaimed, with well-feigned surprise, “these animals yours ! Did you make them ? Are these fields yours that fatten them ? I thought them the property of nature, and whatever nature sends me, that I slay and eat, asking no question and paying no damages.”

“Now, Tsoughilam, you know better than that,” answered Mr. Finlayson, keeping himself well under control. “These cattle were brought from beyond the great sea. They belonged to those who brought them, and unless you make proper restitution, the gates of the fort will be closed against you.”

“Close your gates if you like,” cried the chieftain, his tone changing to one of anger, “and I will batter them down. Close your gates, indeed ! Think you we did not live before the white man came ? and think you we would die were they swept from our shores ?”

Seeing that argument was useless, and that threats would be wasted in the then temper of the savage, Mr. Finlayson having once more sternly demanded reparation, withdrew to the fort to consider what was the best course to pursue.



"As one man the assembled savages rose up."

As soon as he had gone Tsoughilam despatched messengers to the chiefs of the other camps to summon them to a council meeting. They promptly came, and having regaled them with fresh beef, the wily Cowichan addressed them in fiery language.

“Reptiles have crept hither!” he exclaimed; “reptiles with strange stings, whom it were well to crush upon the spot, lest they should soon overspread the whole island. The reward for such an undertaking may be found behind the palisades of the fort. Let us go and possess it.”

Then arose Tsilalthach, chief of the Songhies, and said, “We and our forefathers have lived in happiness upon this island for many years before the existence of these strangers was known. We have eaten the fruits of the earth, have bathed in the waters and in the sunshine, have hunted our forests unquestioned of any, and have fought our enemies manfully. Is all now to be taken from us?”

The instinct of bloodshed was aroused. As one man the assembled savages rose up and cried for the wiping out of the unwelcome intruders and the looting of the fort. In the clear evening air their shouts were easily heard at the fort.

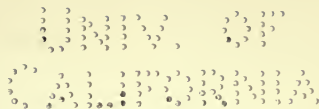
“They mean mischief,” said Mr. Finlayson, shaking his head regretfully. “It’s too bad. I didn’t want to fight with them, and yet they must be taught to respect the company’s property. I wonder how soon they will attack us?”

“Right away, father, to judge by their actions,” responded Rae, who was standing beside Mr. Finlayson on the bastion, and looking over toward the encampment.

“No, no, Rae ; you don’t know them as well as I do. They won’t attack for a while yet. They’ve got to work themselves up to it first.”

And so it proved. At the fort unremitting watch was kept night and day, but the Indians spent the time in singing and shouting and feasting until two full days had elapsed. Then, having assembled all their forces, they summoned courage to commence operations.

Midst savage yells and terrifying antics, calculated in their opinion to put to flight the bravest, they advanced as near to the palisade as they dared, and then, taking advantage of every natural means of concealment, sent in showers of musket-balls that riddled the stockade and came pattering upon the roofs of the houses. The siege of the fort had begun in earnest, and with many hundred savages as assailants it was no joking matter, despite the strength of the fortifications and the thorough equipment of the garrison.



CHAPTER VII.

DIFFICULT PLAYMATES.

THE hail of bullets against the stout stockade and substantial roofs of the fort was kept up for some time with great vigor, but without inflicting any loss whatever upon the garrison.

Nor did it elicit any response. Much as the men would have liked to give the Indians some proofs of their marksmanship that they would not be in a hurry to forget, Mr. Finlayson would not permit a single rifle to be discharged.

“No, my good fellows, no,” he replied to his subordinates, eager for the fray. “I don’t want a drop of blood to be shed if it can possibly be helped. If we have to fight, why, fight we will, and I’ve no fears as to the result ; but I still have hopes of settling this thing without one life being lost.”

After a while the savages grew weary of wasting their precious ammunition to no purpose, and their fire slackened, until finally it ceased. Then Mr. Finlayson seized the opportunity of carrying out a scheme that had been evolved in his busy brain.

Appearing upon one of the bastions, he called to Tsoughilam to come within parleying distance, assuring him that no harm would be done him.

In a very hesitating fashion Tsoughilam drew near, taking care to have at hand a good big tree-stump behind which he might dodge if there should be any sign of treachery on the part of the white men. When he was near enough, Mr. Finlayson addressed him thus :—

“What would you do? What evil would you bring upon yourselves? What folly to think of breaking down our strong walls with your poor guns! Know you not that with one motion of my finger I could blow you all into pieces? And I will do it too,” he cried, raising his voice, as if in growing anger. “Look at your camp now!”

As he brought out the last word at the top of his voice there was a tremendous report from the bastion beside him, and a nine-pounder belched forth a double charge of grape-shot, which, striking into the midst of the frail cedar lodges, smashed them into splinters.

With a terror-stricken howl, Tsoughilam dived behind his stump so recklessly that he tripped and turned a complete somersault, landing on the broad of his back, in which position he lay for a minute, hardly knowing whether some of the cannon’s contents had found a mark in him or not; while from the throats of his tribesmen went up woful wails, because they felt sure many of their women and children must have fallen victims to the terrible thunder-machine.

And so, indeed, they might have done, but for the humane precaution of Mr. Finlayson, who, before he began the parley, had sent his interpreter secretly out of the back gate of the fort to warn the inmates of the lodges selected as a target of their approaching danger, which warning being duly heeded, no further harm was done by the grape-shot than the converting into kindling-wood of some cheaply-made lodges.

When the badly-scared savages had recovered their senses, and ascertained that there had been no fatal injury done to their dear ones, they consulted together, with the result that a deputation of chiefs came slowly towards the forts, and asked for a parley.

Mr. Finlayson invited them within the stockade, offering two of his men as hostages for their safety. The offer was accepted, and the deputation entered the fort.

“Now, my friends,” said the factor, assuming his gravest and most dignified demeanor, while Rae watched him with profound admiration, he seemed so superior in every way to the squalid savages, “I want to show you that although I did not make any return to your fire, how easy it would be for me to utterly destroy you and all the rest of the men, and all your women and children, if I wanted to do so.”

Then he showed them all his men drawn up in line ready to fight, and armed with rifles, pistols, and hunting-knives. He also took them upon the bastion, and let them see the cannon with the cartridges and balls at their side.

Having done this, he led them back into the centre of the enclosure, and ordering the garrison to form a circle round them, he said quietly but firmly,—

“You see, my brothers, that I speak only the truth. But I do not want to destroy. I want that we should be friends. Therefore, I say let those who killed the cattle be given up for punishment, or let the cattle be paid for in furs at their full value.”

The Indians listened attentively, promised to report all that they had seen and heard to their tribes, and withdrew in manifest perturbation of spirit. The factor's words and silent arguments had evidently produced a deep effect.

“Unless I'm much mistaken, my boy, they'll do one thing or the other before the sun goes down,” said Mr. Finlayson in a sanguine tone, his countenance showing how relieved he felt at the prospect of an honorable and satisfactory solution of the situation.

Sunset saw the fulfilment of his prediction. Another and a larger deputation came from the encampment, this time bearing bundles of furs, which they deposited in front of the main gate. Mr. Finlayson ordered the gate to be thrown open, the bearers of the indemnity filed solemnly in, and were received with all due ceremony. The skins were counted and appraised. Their value was pronounced sufficient, and then the pipe of peace was produced, and vows of friendship formally made.

Before they departed the Indians begged Mr. Finlayson to let them have another exhibition of the powers of

the wonderful gun, and he willingly assented. So next morning an old canoe was moored out in the harbor about midway between the fort and the encampment. Then taking careful aim he sent a ball clear through the canoe, and ricocheting across the smooth water to the opposite shore.

The Indians were entirely satisfied. If the white intruders had such fearful weapons as that, there was but one thing to do—namely, to be as friendly as possible with them, which henceforth they took good care to be, and Fort Camosun never was again attacked by any of these bands, although they did not by any means give over their thieving propensities, but seized every chance of picking up any “unconsidered trifles” belonging to their white brothers which fell in their way.

The atmosphere of peace which now brooded over the fort was very favorable to the carrying on of the outdoor operations, which were the factor’s next concern.

The garrison could not always be dependent upon Fort Vancouver for food supplies. They must create them for themselves as soon as possible. Accordingly all hands were set to work to clear the land surrounding the fort, and prepare it for the reception of seed, while a large lot was fenced in for pasture, so that a visitor to Camosun Bay might have taken the establishment to be chiefly of an agricultural character instead of being a fur-trading depot.

Rae soon found these proceedings decidedly lacking in interest. He had not sufficient strength or skill to guide

a plough. He soon got tired of splitting rails for the fences. There never was a boy born who took kindly to the hoe or spade, and as his father did not insist upon his lending a hand, leaving him to follow his own sweet will in the matter, he presently came to feel very much like a butterfly among a lot of bees. Everybody but himself was busy, and so busy that they had no time to give to him. Naturally enough, therefore, he looked about him for companions who would not be so engrossed, and quite as naturally his eyes strayed across the bay to where the Indian camps were clustered on the further shore.

His father had never forbidden his making friends with the Indians, although he had warned him against trusting them to any extent, because he believed them to be treacherous at heart, however friendly they might seem on the surface. But as the days went by in peace and quietness this feeling of insecurity disappeared, and so when one day Rae asked his father if he might go over to the Indian encampment, Mr. Finlayson made no objection, contenting himself with a warning not to get into any kind of a dispute with the lads there.

Rae owned a light swift canoe which his father had procured for him, and in the management of which he had become quite skilful. In this he paddled across the bay, and jumping ashore made his way to the encampment with as easy an air as if he were a long-established visitor.

None of the men were visible, they being all off fishing or hunting, but a number of children could be seen peep-

ing out of the doorways of the lodges or from behind them in a timid way, as though afraid to meet the white boy.

Anxious to establish himself on a friendly footing, Rae called to them, and made signs intended to indicate his desire for a closer acquaintance, in response to which they presently began to emerge one by one, and to gather about him with eyes full of curiosity.

They were quite a lot of good-looking youngsters, and Rae thought they promised well as playfellows, so he put forth his most gracious manner, and made vigorous efforts to explain to them that he had come over to be their friend, and wanted them to feel at their ease with him.

He was such a handsome boy, and had such a winning way, that although he could use only a few phrases of their language, he quickly won the confidence of the young savages, and ere long they crowded round him to examine his clothing, and admire the hunting-knife and pistol he wore in his belt.

They had bright intelligent faces, and seemed quite well-behaved and kindly disposed, so that Rae soon felt at home amongst them, and spent the whole morning in their company.

On his return to the fort at dinner time, he reported to his father how well he had got on, and then gave Mr. Finlayson an idea that had not occurred to him before. It was of the first importance that as friendly relations as possible should exist between the fort and the encamp-

ment. Now what was there to prevent Rae being the connecting link to unite the two together? He could go freely to the encampment, and from time to time invite the Indian boys to come over to the fort for a little feast or something of that kind. In this way the hearts of their parents would be won, and a neighborly feeling established that could not fail to be mutually beneficial.

“I’m very glad you’ve been over there,” said he, when he had thought this all out. “I was a little doubtful about your going, I confess, although I didn’t say so, but now I believe you couldn’t have done a better thing. I appoint you my ambassador to the Songhies, and you must make as many friends among them as you can. It will be a good thing all round.”

Rae did not understand precisely what it meant to be an ambassador, but he grasped clearly enough the idea that he was to act as his father’s representative, and this tickled him immensely. A little while afterward he came to his father with a request that made the factor burst out laughing.

“Father,” said he, with a blush that betrayed his consciousness of what he was about to ask being likely to expose him to some ridicule, “if I’m going to be what you call your ambassador to the Indians, oughtn’t I to wear a uniform?”

When Mr. Finlayson had done laughing, he told Rae to stand up straight in front of him, and looking him over with a critical eye, as though he were taking his measure, he said, still smiling, —

“A uniform, Rae ; what kind of a uniform would you like ? Red coat, blue trousers, gold lace, and cocked hat with feathers ? ”

Rae looked down to the ground, and the blush deepened on his cheek as he replied in a tone that had a hint of petulance in it, —

“No, father ; you know well enough I didn’t mean all that, but I do think I might have some kind of a uniform. The Indian boys would think all the more of me.”

Seeing how much in earnest his son was, Mr. Finlayson stopped his chaffing, and said quite seriously, —

“You’re not far wrong, my boy, and I’ll see if we can’t fix up something for you.”

At this Rae’s face became radiant. “O father, will you ? ” he exclaimed eagerly. “What a dear good father you are ! and will you see about it right away ? ”

“Why, yes,” responded the factor ; “I’ll have a talk with Tailor Jim about it.”

“Tailor Jim ” was a member of the garrison who had learned the trade of tailoring before his adventurous, roving spirit caused him to throw aside the goose and shears for the gun and hunting-knife, and after drifting about the west coast he had finally found his way into the employ of the Hudson’s Bay Company, where his knowledge of the needle rendered him a most useful acquisition to any of the establishments.

Without loss of time Tailor Jim was consulted. He entered heartily into the spirit of the thing, and after the matter had been discussed at some length, it was settled

that out of the cloth in the stores he should make Rae a red tunic, and blue trousers with a red stripe, which, with a blue cap and a white belt, certainly could not fail to give him a thoroughly martial appearance.

In fact, when the uniform was completed, and Rae, feeling as proud as a peacock with a perfect tail, strutted up and down the centre of the enclosure in order that all the garrison might admire his fine feathers, the military idea at once entered his mind and took complete possession of it.

“O father,” said he, his face glowing with excitement, “I’m going to be a soldier, and I’ll get up a regiment among the Indian boys, and I’ll drill them. Won’t that be fine?”

Mr. Finlayson smiled indulgently.

“A fine notion no doubt, my boy, but you’ll have a hard job to carry it out. Those harum-scarum brats will never do what you tell them. You’re welcome to try, of course. It’ll do no harm, but you mustn’t be disappointed if you can’t make anything of it.”

“Oh, never fear,” replied Rae confidently; “I’ll manage them all right. I know how to do it.”

The factor shook his head doubtingly. “You’re young, my son, you’re young, and things seem easier now than they will when you’re twice your age. But never mind; the best way to learn is by trying, and you’ll have the experience though you gain nothing else.”

Full of energy for his new scheme, Rae had the carpenter make him half-a-dozen wooden swords and a score

of wooden muskets. For himself, as commander of the force, he secured a small cutlass that happened to be in the armory of the fort, and with this hung at his belt he felt quite equal to anything. His knowledge of drilling was very slight, but he had some idea of marching in step and so forth. This, however, did not trouble him. What he lacked in knowledge he made up in enthusiasm, and he was determined to have a good time anyway.

But when he came to put his brilliant idea into execution, he found the going far from being as smooth as he had fondly hoped.

In the first place, the young Indians seemed to think it was some kind of hidden design to entrap them into the bondage of the company, and it took a lot of coaxing and a good many presents of sugar lumps and brass buttons, for which an Indian boy will venture almost anything, to overcome this objection.

Then, in the second place, the Indian's keen sense of humor made them fully alive to the ridiculous side of the matter. They certainly did look about as much unlike what they purported to be as it is possible to imagine, and the ludicrousness of their appearance was not lost upon them. Now above all things an Indian cannot endure being laughed at, so that Rae had no easy task to convince them that it wasn't all a big joke, but was really a very interesting play. And finally, when at last he did succeed after infinite trouble in getting some twenty of the boys into line, they differed so astonishingly in their conception of what he wanted them to do that it would

certainly have sorely tried the staidest of Quakers' control over both his temper and his laughter to see them perform.

They twisted and turned, and tripped over one another's toes, and jammed their wooden muskets into each other's backs, and threatened one another's eyes with the points of their wooden swords. In fact, moved in part by bewilderment and in part by mischief, they made confusion worse confounded, until at last in sheer despair Rae threw himself on the ground, hardly knowing whether to laugh or to cry.

"Oh dear," he groaned, "they'll never learn to be soldiers, and we might have such good times if they only would."

Seeing his evident concern, the Indian boys crowded round him, looking as contrite as they knew how, and after some expostulation with them, Rae felt encouraged to make another essay. This time they certainly did better, although their attempt to "form fours" would have sent an ordinary drill-sergeant into convulsions of either wrath or laughter, according to the way he took it.

"Ah! now that's a good deal better," said Rae, with a pleased smile. "You'll learn it all right in a little while, if you'll only stick at it."

But it was just there the chief difficulty lay. They did not want to stick at it. Their volatile natures soon wearied of the new amusement, and Rae found his regiment fast falling to pieces for lack of interest.

In the emergency a new idea came to him. Instead of

trying to drill the boys into a regular regiment, as had been his first plan, he divided them into two bands, and giving the lead of one division to the son of Tsilalthach, the Songhies chief, he took the command of the other himself.

His scheme was to have some of that mimic warfare which is so dear to the heart of every boy, and now he found his savage playmates as full of interest as he could wish. To play at fighting was quite according to their taste, and a plan of campaign was speedily settled upon.

Not far from the rear of the camp rose a little hill, whose steep sides were almost bare of trees and shrubbery, while the top was levelled off as though by hand. It suited Rae's purpose admirably. They would play defending the citadel, taking turns in being garrison and assailants.

Wishing to be magnanimous at the start, Rae gave Tasga, the chieftain's son, the first defence of the hill, while he undertook the attack. As it was easier to defend than attack, Rae thought it only fair that he should have the majority of the boys on his side, so it was agreed that there should be eleven in his party to only nine of their opponents.

The preliminaries being then satisfactorily arranged, the proceedings opened by Tasga and his band taking up their position on the summit of the hill, where they awaited the onset of Rae and his supporters.

Creeping cautiously up the slope, the latter had

almost reached the summit before the others made any sign of resistance. Then suddenly they sprang upon their opponents, and having been well instructed by Tasga, who had the makings of a famous war-chief in him, seized them by the elbows, turned them round, and sent them tumbling down the hill before they had time to recover from the unexpected ingenuity of the onset.

Rae went with the rest. He had not been looking for this kind of a reception, and was as much caught off guard as they were; but when he had picked himself up after his undignified descent, he vowed he would make a better showing the next attempt.

Accordingly, although according to the understanding at the start he and Tasga should have changed places, he shouted to him to stay where he was, as he would try again to dislodge him! This suited the budding chieftain all right, and Rae proceeded to harangue his little band in vigorous style after the manner of commanders upon the eve of battle.

“We must get them down out of that this time,” he said, “no matter what it costs. They got the start of us last time, but they won’t do it again. I know a trick that is worth two of theirs.” And then he hastened to explain to them what he meant.

His boys heartily approved of his plans, testifying their enthusiasm by wild whoops prophetic of victory; and when he felt that he had worked them up to the right pitch, he led them forth to a second essay.

This time Tasga and his force came part of the way down to meet them, the ease with which the first overthrow was accomplished having made them over-confident. Rae rejoiced at this, for it rendered more certain the success of his plan of campaign.

With every faculty attent, and every nerve and muscle ready for instant action, the two bands of boys drew near to each other. When they were almost within touching distance there was a pause. Tasga's boys knew well enough they could not repeat the manoeuvre which had proved so brilliant a success before, while Rae's boys were waiting the signal to do what had been enjoined upon them.

This came in the single word "Now," which Rae suddenly shouted, at the same moment throwing himself forward as though to bow at Tasga's feet. But instead of making obeisance to him, he grasped him by the ankles, and putting all his strength into one mighty effort, threw him over his back in such a way that he landed head first behind him.

The same stratagem being successfully carried out by his supporters, the result was that almost in the twinkling of an eye the positions of the two parties were completely reversed, Rae's occupying the crest of the hill, while Tasga's were on the slope below them.

Now when Rae had been routed he took his discomfiture quite good-humoredly, and the same spirit was shown by his companions; but on Tasga the clever overthrow had an entirely different effect. For a moment he

lay still as if stunned, and Rae, who had begun to cheer triumphantly, checked himself through fear that Tasga had been hurt.

The next instant, however, he was cruelly undeceived, for the wily Indian, whose savage temper had been aroused, leaped to his feet and hurled himself at Rae with the lightning-like spring of a wild-cat.

Nor was his rapidity of action the only point of resemblance. Not content with gripping Rae around the waist, as though he would fain break his back, he sank his white teeth deep into his left shoulder, causing him to shriek with pain and alarm.

The extreme suddenness and startling ferocity of Tasga's attack almost paralyzed the white boy for an instant. But it was only for an instant. He had a temper as well as Tasga, and it at once rose to blood heat.

"You young brute!" he cried. "Will you dare to bite me that way?" And taking a fresh grip of the Indian he bore upon him with all his strength, forcing him steadily backward, until by a clever clip of the heel he knocked his left foot from under him, and so threw him violently backward, falling with him to the ground.

In the fall Tasga's teeth were shaken from their vicious hold, and before he could close them again in the same way Rae, whose wrath was now fully aroused, had both hands at his throat.

Up to this time Tasga's supporters had looked on in amazement at the turn affairs had taken, but when they saw the plight of their leader they were moved to action.

Giving vent to fierce cries, they gathered round the struggling pair with looks that boded ill for Rae. They knew little of and cared less for the principle of British fair play, and good-humored as their sport had been up to the moment of their leader losing his temper, they were quite ready to turn it into a savage fight without any regard to the immense disparity of odds, for Rae could hardly count upon much assistance from the Indian boys who had made up his party.

CHAPTER VIII.

AFLOAT AGAIN.

RAE was decidedly getting the better of the struggle with Tasga, and would soon have had him at his mercy, when several of the latter's companions flung themselves into the struggle, and tore the two combatants apart, not indeed with the idea of putting an end to the contest of strength, but rather of giving Tasga an unfair advantage by lending him their aid.

It was at this juncture, and just when Rae's position was positively critical—for the Indians were in the mood for any kind of mischief—that most timely and welcome relief came from an unexpected quarter.

It seemed that Tasga's mother, the chief's favorite wife, and some of the other women of the camp had been unobserved spectators of the game of defending the citadel which Rae had introduced, and they had thought it very good sport indeed up to this point. But now their quick instinct told them that the fun was changed to earnest, and that they had better interfere, so, shouting shrill commands addressed to their respective sons, they hurried up the hill to where the ring of excited boys had closed ominously around Rae.

They did not stop to inquire into the merits of the matter. They simply laid hands upon the boys, and pulled them away, until at last Rae was left standing alone, a trifle dazed and out of breath, but as full of spirit as ever, while Tasga, struggling vainly to escape from his mother's sinewy grasp, glared at him with the eyes of an enraged panther.

Now Rae's perceptions were as keen as could be at all expected in a boy of his age, and he did not need to look around twice to take in the fact that the more quickly he made himself scarce in that particular locality the greater practical wisdom he would show.

It might seem more dignified to stand his ground, and demand an explanation of Tasga's inexcusable outbreak, but it certainly was not expedient; so relieving his mind by calling out jauntily, "Well, good-bye till you learn how to behave better," he dived through the circle of boys and women, and making no pretence to stand upon the order of his going, set off at full speed for the beach, and, launching his canoe, had got a hundred yards out into the bay before the Indian boys could break away from the women's hands to follow him.

Mr. Finlayson enjoyed a hearty laugh at Rae's vivacious recital of his exciting experience, even though he regretted the turn affairs had taken.

"It's too bad, Rae, these young rascals didn't behave better. I was hoping you'd be able to make friends with them. But they're all a bad lot, I'm afraid, and we'll just have to give up the idea of trying to be sociable.

They're not to be trusted, any of them, old or young, and I'm glad we've found it out before they had the chance to do us any harm. You'll have to stick pretty close by the fort after this, and not go out of sight unless you are with the men."

Rae could not dispute the propriety of this injunction, and yet it certainly was hard for an active, enterprising boy like himself to be confined to the enclosure of the fort unless some of the men happened to be going into the woods, or out upon the bay. Of course they did this nearly every day, and were always glad of his company.

But even then Rae often found the time hang heavy upon his hands, and accordingly when one of the company's schooners came up from Fort Vancouver with some supplies for Fort Camosun, and he learned that she was to continue her voyage as far as Fort Simpson, the thought at once came into his mind of going with her.

At first Mr. Finlayson strongly objected. He was not only very loath to part with Rae—for the boy was the very apple of his eye—but he did not altogether think it a safe expedition. The schooner, to be sure, could follow the inner course, and not go out into the ocean; still there were dangers even in these land-locked straits and inlets, and moreover Rae was undoubtedly inclined to be rash, however seriously he might purpose to be cautious.

Yet Rae pressed his petition so warmly, supporting it with such promises of being careful, and the captain of the *Plover* seemed so willing to take the boy, that in the

end Mr. Finlayson's resolution weakened, and he gave a manifestly reluctant consent.

"It's foolish, of course, for me to pay attention to it," he said, "but somehow or other I've the feeling that you'd better not go, Rae."

"Well, father," responded Rae, making a heroic effort to compose himself, "if you really don't want me to go, I won't ask you any more. But" — and here there came into his countenance a pathetic look that somehow brought out with special emphasis his resemblance to his dead mother — "you know there's not much fun for me here, and I do so love to be at sea."

It was now the father's turn to be heroic. Laying a firm hand upon his own feelings, he let a pleasant smile take the place of the grave look his face had worn, and giving Rae a little push from him, said in a jocular tone, —

"Oh! all right then, have your own way. You don't want to be tied to your father's coat-tails, that's plain enough, and I suppose it's no more than natural. You didn't get your fondness for the water from me, that's certain. I'm quite content with dry land, and you make me feel a good deal like the old hen that hatched a duckling."

In high glee at having gained his father's consent, Rae, after thanking him warmly, rushed off to tell Captain Hanson, and to make arrangements for the trip.

The *Plover* had a neat little cabin in which there was a spare berth that Rae could have, and the boy found huge

delight in getting his various belongings aboard, and stowing them away in the lockers beneath his berth.

He had only one day in which to do this, so that the hours were full of bustle; but, thanks to his father's affectionate care, nothing was omitted that he could possibly need. Indeed, no lad ever went upon a similar expedition more completely equipped. Beside a chest full of clothing, he had another containing ammunition, medicines, trinkets for barter with the savages, knives, hatchets, pistols, and some carefully-packed dainties to vary the monotony of the fare on ship-board. Thus with his fine rifle and handsome hunting-knife he lacked positively nothing, and it was with no small degree of pride that he exhibited his outfit to Captain Hanson, who showed himself duly impressed thereby.

The *Plover* sailed on a beautiful morning in late spring, and the last that Rae saw of the fort as the vessel rounded the point, his father stood upon the southern bastion waving his hat in farewell. Little did the boy imagine how many days would pass, and what strange adventures he would have, ere his eyes once more fell upon that familiar figure. Happily for him the future seemed as bright as the day itself, and he took no anxious thought for the morrow.

Gliding out into the broad Strait of Juan de Fuca, the *Plover* caught in her white sails the full strength of the breeze blowing in from the Pacific, and thrashed merrily through the white caps that flecked the blue brine. Rae romped about the deck in great spirits. He had nothing

to fear from sickness this time, and the more the trim little vessel heeled over at the bidding of the breeze the better it suited him, even though he had to hold on tight by the main shrouds to save himself from rolling ignominiously into the lee scuppers.

If he had known that famous old song, —

“ A wet sheet and a flowing sea,
A wind that follows fast,
And fills the white and rustling sail,
And bends the gallant mast,”

he certainly would have been singing it with the full force of his lungs; but, lacking this knowledge, he had to content himself with successive exclamations of delight as the schooner ploughed her way swiftly northward, steering for the western shore of San Juan Island.

Her course lay close to that island and through Haro Strait, and the strong fresh easterly breeze being all that could be desired, making but little tacking necessary, Captain Hanson at the tiller did not require to give his whole attention to it, and was ready to answer the questions Rae showered upon him, and to tell what he knew of the different places coming into view.

“Do we stop anywhere on the way to Port Simpson?” he asked, wondering if the country on either side of the strait had other inhabitants than wild animals, and perhaps a few Indians.

“Why, yes,” replied the captain; “we’ll put in at Nanaimo for a couple of days, and we must call at Port Rupert. Why do you ask, Rae? Do you think you’ll be getting tired of the schooner?”

"Oh, no," responded Rae, "not that at all; but you see I've a lot of trinkets and things to buy furs with if I get a chance, and I'm glad you do stop somewhere, for I suppose there'll be some Indians around, and I can do a little trade on my own account."

"Just listen to the lad!" laughed the captain. "Why, you don't look old enough to be done playing, and yet here you are planning how to make your fortune at trading. You evidently believe in beginning young, Rae."

"I do that," returned Rae promptly. "I want to make my way in the world, and the sooner I begin the better. I don't want my father to be doing everything for me, although" — and here he gave a laugh that was half a sigh at the thought of his father left lonely at the fort — "I am sure he'd rather do it than have me go away from him; but a fellow must strike out for himself sometime, mustn't he, captain?" and he turned an appealing look upon the master of the schooner, being anxious that he should justify his course of action in coming away.

"To be sure, to be sure," asserted the mariner as cordially as Rae could desire. "Not that I blame your father at all, you know," he hastened to add. "If I had a boy like you," and he gave Rae a glance of frank approval, "I'd see it his way, no doubt. Now there's poor little Freckles there, if his father had lived to give him a fair start he'd perhaps have come to something; but you see he died when Freckles was nothing but a baby, and the mother soon followed him, and the little shaver was knocked about there at Vancouver, the Indians seemin'

to be kinder to him than the white folks most of the time, until he came to be not much better than a half-breed cub, although there's not a drop of Indian blood in his veins."

"Poor Freckles!" said Rae in a tone of deep sympathy; "is that what makes him so queer? I didn't like him a bit until now, but I feel so sorry for him I'm just going to be friends with him."

"Go ahead by all means, my boy," said the captain. "The poor lad seems frightened of me, although I haven't meant to be hard on him, and I just took him on board to get him away from the fort, they were all so down on him there."

Freckles was a boy about Rae's own age that filled the same position on board the schooner that the little servant girl does in a London boarding-house. He was cabin boy, cook's help, and sailor's drudge combined.

However pathetic his history, his personal appearance was anything but attractive. Indeed it would not be easy to picture a boy more lacking in elements of interest. He was lanky and loose-strung of figure. His features seemed moulded each after a different pattern, his nose being as long and as thick as his lips were contracted and thin, while his eyes were out of harmony with both. His otherwise colorless complexion was thickly dotted over with freckles of phenomenal size and depth of tint, hence the nickname which had practically supplanted his proper designation. As for his expression, he always seemed to be suggesting, if not saying, "You may kick me if you want to, but please don't!"

Yet Freckles, whose right name by the way was Rory M'Callum, had honest Scotch blood in his veins, and it was only the hardships of his lot working upon a naturally shy, sensitive nature which had made of him what he was. But little kindness had he ever known, though more than his share of cuffs had fallen to him, and he presented a startling contrast to Rae, who had always lived in an atmosphere of love and prosperity.

The idea of cultivating Freckles's acquaintance in order to be kind to him having entered Rae's mind, it was not his way to tarry long about putting it into execution, and so, as soon as he saw the boy alone, leaning over the bulwark in a disconsolate fashion watching the waves dashing against the schooner's side, he went up to him, saying cheerily, —

“She's going fine, isn't she, Freckles? Don't you love sailing along like this?”

There was such unmistakable good-fellowship in the tone no less than in the words themselves, that Freckles fairly gasped with astonishment. He had not been addressed in that fashion for many a day, and there were tears in his pale blue eyes as he turned them upon Rae.

“Yes, sir,” he murmured almost inaudibly, “the *Plover* is a good sailer, and Captain Hanson knows how to make her go her best.”

Rae laughed merrily at the first part of Freckles's response.

“Look here,” he said good-humoredly, “you mustn't say sir to me, Freckles. I'm no older than you are, and

I'm not your master anyway. Keep your sirs for the captain, and just call me Rae. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir — Rae, I mean," stammered Freckles, who still, it was clear, felt ill at ease, despite Rae's anxiety for him to come upon an even footing with himself.

"There you go again, Freckles," laughed Rae. "You're perfectly ridiculous, and you must get over it right away if you want to be friends."

There was something so sincere and frank in Rae's advances that even timid, doubting Freckles began to feel his heart expand in response to them, and there came a new light into his eye and an unaccustomed flush to his cheek, as he said shyly, —

"I'd like to be friends with you if you'll let me. I've never had a friend. Everybody's been hard on me except Captain Hanson."

"Of course I'll let you, Freckles," responded Rae heartily; "that's just what I've been trying to get into your head. You see I'm going to be on board the *Plover* for the next couple of months, and we can have good times together, can't we?"

Freckles's reply was a nod of unusual vigor for him, and he was just about to say something, when a sharp call of "Freckles, Freckles! where are you, you lubber?" from the galley made him start as if he had been struck, and he scuttled off to obey the cook's behests, whatever they might be.

"Poor Freckles!" soliloquized Rae, following the shambling figure with a look of sympathy. "He's had a

hard time of it, that's certain ; but I'll do what I can to make things easier for him."

All that day the *Plover* kept steadily on through the beautiful straits that divided the islands which made a regular archipelago of the sea intervening between Vancouver Island and the mainland. A more enchanting sail could hardly be imagined. The breeze was steady and strong ; the sun shone with unclouded brilliancy ; the shores on either hand were clothed to the very water's edge with the richest verdure ; the white and gray gulls floated high in the air in great circles, or swam gracefully upon the wave-tops ; but no sign of human habitation could be discerned. The speedy schooner seemed to be voyaging into an earthly paradise whose utter loneliness required some explanation ; for what fairer spot could men wish to inhabit ?

This was the inquiry which rose in Rae's mind after he had been a long time scanning the landscape in the hope of detecting some sign of the presence of man, and he went to Captain Hanson with it.

"Do any people live on the land there ?" answered the captain ; "well, not many, I should say — leastwise, I've never seen them. But then I've only been through here a couple of times before, and I've never landed except at Nanaimo."

"I'm sure it must be a fine country for Indians," said Rae, "and I wonder you haven't landed to see if there weren't some of them about."

The captain turned round so as to look straight into Rae's face.

“You sly fellow! Don’t I know what you’re driving at! You want me to put in at some likely place on the chance of finding Indians for you to work off some of your trinkets. Isn’t that it?”

Rae blushed as he nodded assent, adding, —

“Well, that’s all right, captain, isn’t it? I want very much to bring home some good skins to make a present to father for being so good as to let me go with you.”

“Right enough, my boy,” responded the captain; “and I’d be glad enough to oblige you if I could only spare the time, but I’ve got to push on as fast as I can, for they’ll be waiting for me at Port Simpson.”

That Captain Hanson was sincere in his reason for not delaying was evident from the way he seized every opportunity to get all the speed he could out of the *Plover*, and the sturdy little schooner fairly tore through the water under the pressure of a full cloud of canvas.

Skirting the eastern shore of Galliano and Gabriola islands, there lay on their right the glorious Gulf of Georgia, whose waters in the day-time were the playground of schools of black whales that afforded Rae constant amusement by their antics, and at night glowed with brilliant phosphorescence beyond the power of words to describe.

Nanaimo was reached in good time; and Rae had leave from Captain Hanson to spend the whole day ashore, as the schooner would not start again until the following morning.

He at once asked that Freckles be allowed to accompany him; and his request being granted, he proceeded to fit

out the delighted boy for hunting, as he intended to get somebody from the fort to act as guide and take him into the forest.

Finding that Freckles knew nothing about the use of a rifle, he gave him a pistol with instructions not to fire it unless he was very near what he wanted to shoot, and also a hatchet and hunting-knife to hang in his belt.

Thus equipped, and with a whole day's respite from work before him, Freckles became almost radiant. He had never before in his life felt so elated. Rae's championship and society was already beginning to work a change in him for the better.

At the fort Rae had no difficulty in securing the services of a half-breed as guide, and then set forth into the forest sanguine of returning with a good bag.

The half-breed knew the country round about thoroughly well; and Rae having promised him a silver half-dollar if they had a good day's shooting, he was determined to earn the reward.

It was not long before they came upon grouse in plenty, and Rae used his rifle with such good effect that presently as many birds were secured as they cared to carry. Freckles, stimulated by his companion's example, tried his luck with the pistol, and, as much to his surprise as delight, actually succeeded in winging a young bird, that, after an exciting chase, he was able to finish with a blow from a stick.

Thus they journeyed on, enjoying themselves thoroughly, and getting deeper into the forest, until by noon Rae

thought they had gone far enough. So they halted for lunch beside a small stream of cool, clear water, it being decided to retrace their steps as soon as they had eaten and rested.

The half-breed bore a capacious knapsack well filled with biscuits and cold meat, and the three were having a good time disposing of them in the shade of a big tree, when a strange, wild scream rang through the forest that sent a thrill through their hearts, and caused the half-breed dogs, two ugly curs of the kind always seen about an Indian village, to set up a furious barking.

"A panther!" exclaimed the half-breed under his breath, as though afraid of the animal hearing him. "He's seen us, and he's angry."

At the mention of the word "panther," Rae's first feeling was one of alarm, and the impulse to fly came strongly over him. But for very shame's sake he resisted it, and, striving to seem quite unconcerned, asked the half-breed in a voice whose steadiness surprised himself, —

"Do you see him? Is he near us?"

The half-breed, gazing intently in the direction whence the cry had come, was silent for a few minutes; and then, pointing to where the shade was deepest, he whispered, —

"There he is; see his eyes!"

Rae bent his eyes thither, and after a moment caught the gleam of the creature's fiery orbs, as, crouching upon the lower limb of a huge birch, it seemed ready to spring to the attack on the slightest provocation.

Freckles at the first alarm had taken up his position

behind Rae, his right hand holding the pistol tremblingly, while his left fumbled with the hatchet that hung in his belt. He was thoroughly frightened, but preferred staying with the others to running away alone.

When the first spasm of fright had passed with Rae, another feeling took its place—to wit, the ambition to kill the fierce brute that had introduced itself so rudely, and to bring its skin and head back to his father as a trophy of his prowess.

“I’d like to kill that panther,” said he in a low tone to the half-breed. “Will you help me?”

Now the half-breed would have very much preferred beating a retreat, and leaving the panther in possession of the field; but when Rae had the daring to propose that they should stay and fight it out, he felt ashamed to refuse, so in a very reluctant way he said, —

“All right; but we’ve got to look mighty sharp.”

Conscious of tremors that he could not control, yet despising himself for having, Rae looked carefully to his rifle to make sure that it was properly capped, then felt for his hunting-knife, and gathered himself together for the struggle.

“Aren’t you going to run for it?” came in a hoarse whisper from behind, where Freckles stood, wondering why flight was delayed an instant.

“No, I’m not,” answered Rae without turning his head; “but you may if you want to.”

Freckles half turned as though to make a start, then jerked himself back looking very shamefaced.

“I won’t run,” he muttered, “since he won’t.”

Truly the latent forces of the poor boy’s nature were being brought out with astonishing rapidity in the new atmosphere he was now breathing.

The panther, seeing that they intended to stand their ground, seemed to lose some of the eagerness for the prey it had first shown, and Rae, noting this, began to fear lest it should turn tail and vanish into the depths of the forest.

“I’m going to try a shot at him; you fire too,” said he to the half-breed, who stood on his left.

The latter grunted assent, and, levelling the old flint-lock that he carried, pulled the trigger at the same instant with Rae. But only a single report rang out. The flint-lock had missed fire, as it was apt to do only too often, earning many a malediction from its disgusted owner.

Rae had taken careful aim for the space between those flaming eyes, and that his bullet had sped straight and true was evident from the panther tumbling in a yellow heap at the foot of the tree, to be pounced upon by the snarling dogs.

With a shout of exultation Rae rushed forward, in spite of the warning of the half-breed, who knew well how marvellously tenacious of life such creatures were. Nor was the warning without good reason.

The panther had been “only scotched, not killed,” by the bullet, and a minute sufficed for it to recover itself sufficiently to meet Rae with a roar, and a display of gleaming fangs that brought his charge to a sudden stop.

“Take care!” cried the half-breed, who had kept some distance in the rear, although Freckles had followed close upon his friend’s heels.

But there was neither time nor space to take care. Switching its tail violently from side to side the panther for an instant glared at Rae with eyes appalling in their baleful intensity, and then launched its tawny form full at him!

Whence came the inspiration Rae assuredly could not tell, but in that awful moment when the infuriated creature was manifestly gathering itself for the spring the thought flashed into the boy’s mind: “If I stand still I cannot escape it. If I try to run it will be upon my back. But if I dart towards it at the same moment that it springs, won’t it leap clear over me?”

Arguing thus, he threw himself forward as though he were diving, falling headlong full ten feet from the spot upon which he had been standing when the panther sprang at him.

The scheme succeeded admirably. Instead of being struck down by those dreadful claws he escaped untouched, the brute landing a yard beyond him.

But was it only a temporary respite? Before he could do anything in self-defence the panther would be on him again unless instantly checked, and who was to do this? The half-breed’s gun was empty, and he himself stood twenty feet away, seeming afraid to render assistance.

Could any aid be hoped from Freckles?

CHAPTER IX.

A WHALE AND A WHIRLPOOL.

TO the end of his days Freckles was never able to explain how he came to do it, although he was fond of telling the story, because he always considered his action then the greatest achievement of his life.

This was what occurred. The spring of the panther, which had carried it beyond Rae, brought it almost at Freckles's feet, and instead of quailing before the furious brute the boy, inspired by a passionate anxiety for Rae rather than by any concern for his own safety, thrust his pistol right into the animal's gaping mouth, and pulled the trigger.

It could not have been better done. The bullet crashed into the creature's brain, and with a frightful contortion it rolled over between the two boys, this time dead beyond a doubt.

Springing to his feet Rae rushed at Freckles, and throwing his arms about his neck hugged him affectionately, at the same time waltzing him round on the sward, while he shouted joyously, —

“Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah! we're the boys for the

panthers! Aren't we, Freckles? I hit him first, and you finished him off. That's the way to do it." And round and round he went, until, getting completely out of breath, he let go of Freckles, and threw himself down on the grass to rest.

To have a demonstration like this made over him was such a novelty to Freckles that he had no idea how to respond to it, so he just quietly submitted; but his happy face showed how he enjoyed it all. As for the half-breed, when he had recovered from his astonishment at both the boys escaping unhurt, he cautiously approached the panther, and after touching it with his foot to try if it was unquestionably dead, cut the creature's throat so as to make assurance doubly sure.

"Hadn't you better skin him while you're about it?" suggested Rae. "I want his fur, and his head too, to take home to my father."

Nothing loath, the half-breed went to work in a way that showed him to be an experienced hunter, and it was not long before he had the panther stripped of his yellow coat and neatly decapitated.

This accomplished, the next business was to get back to Nanaimo with all speed, for the afternoon shadows were already lengthening.

Thanks to the half-breed's intimate acquaintance with the country, they were able to take a shorter route than that by which they had come, and it was not yet dark when they reached the fort, where Captain Hanson was awaiting them with rising impatience.

“What kept you so long?” he demanded. “I was just about thinking of sending out a couple of the Indians to hunt you up.”

“That’s what kept us, captain,” replied Rae, pointing to the tawny bundle that the half-breed bore. “Open it out and show him what it is,” he added in a tone of triumph to the dusky porter.

The half-breed threw the bundle down, and spread out the skin so that it seemed to belong to a larger animal than was really the case. “There now!” he cried proudly. “What do you think of that?”

Captain Hanson’s eyes opened wide with wonder. “Hollo!” he exclaimed, “that was a nasty brute. How did you kill him?” and he looked at the half-breed as though he took it for granted the credit would belong to him.

“No, no,” said Rae energetically, rightly interpreting the captain’s glance. “He had nothing to do with it. We did it all ourselves, didn’t we, Freckles?”

“You did?” queried the captain; “and how did Freckles help?”

Thereupon Rae related the whole story, Freckles listening with as much interest as though it were all new to him.

When he had finished, Captain Hanson gave them each a hearty clap on the back, saying, —

“Good for you, boys! You’re regular heroes. Won’t your father be proud of you, Rae? and as for Freckles, I’ve got quite a different notion of you. I’d no idea there was such good stuff in you.”

Freckles blushed violently, and looked as if he'd like to run away from such unaccustomed praise. As for making any reply, that was quite beyond his powers.

The men at the fort pronounced the panther skin a very good specimen indeed, and an old Indian who had skill in that business undertook to prepare it carefully, and have it all ready for Rae when the schooner called on her way back from Port Simpson.

At daylight the following morning the *Plover* bade good-bye to Nanaimo, and resumed the voyage northward. The prosperous weather continued, and the sail up the broad Gulf of Georgia was altogether delightful. At Rae's intercession, Captain Hanson relieved Freckles of his duties as cook's assistant and sailor's fag, directing him simply to act as cabin boy, keeping the cabin in order, and being ready to do anything for him that might be required.

This change of work gave him a good deal more leisure, and this was just what Rae wanted, as the boys were then able to be a good deal together, and Rae found Freckles to be by no means the poor company he seemed at first. The boy had a good deal of ingenuity, and was quite clever with his fingers, while his brain could work actively enough under favorable circumstances.

The small black whales that romped about in the blue water interested the boys greatly, and one morning when the schooner was lying becalmed, Rae asked Captain Hanson to allow him to go off in the boat with a couple

of the sailors, and see if they could not harpoon a whale just for the fun of the thing.

As there seemed no prospect of a breeze for a couple of hours at least, the captain consented, on condition that the boat should not go more than half-a-mile from the schooner; so off they started, Rae, Freckles, and the two youngest sailors — an enterprising quartette indeed.

As their object was amusement, not business, Rae undertook the harpooning, while the sailors had the oars, and Freckles held the tiller.

The surface of the bay was glassy smooth, except when broken into ripples by the gambols of the whales. It was not easy to get near enough to any of the big fish, although they did not seem to be keeping any sort of a look-out, but just having a good time among themselves. Again and again the boat was sent after one of them in vain, and the sailors were beginning to get tired of the work, and to suggest returning to the schooner, when, in the nick of time, they got within striking distance of a fine big fellow, and, with a tremendous effort, Rae hurled the heavy harpoon so that it sank deep into the black shiny body just below the fore-fin.

The instant it felt the iron the whale rushed forward a little way, and then dived, taking out the line at a tremendous rate, until the whole length of it (which was only a couple of hundred yards, for it was not a regular whaling line) had been exhausted.

In his eagerness to follow its course, Rae had continued standing in the bow of the boat, and Freckles for the

same reason had jumped up on the stern thwarts, where he stood craning his long thin neck as he watched the outrunning line.

Now Rae had fastened the boat end of the line to the bow seat, and when the last foot had run out the whale, of course, did not stop to consider the consequence of the sudden strain that must come, but kept right on, the effect being to give a tremendous jerk that sent Rae sideways overboard, threw Freckles backward into the water, and tumbled both the sailors in the bottom of the boat as though they had simultaneously "caught a crab."

Captain Hanson, who saw the whole thing from the schooner, where he was lounging upon the poop, burst into a roar of laughter that caused the cook to thrust his head out of the galley with a look of inquiry on his countenance.

"Look there!" cried the captain, hardly able to speak for laughing, pointing to the boat which lay motionless on the water, for the sudden jerk had torn the harpoon from its hold, and the whale's task of towing was over. "Oh! if you only could have seen them turn somersaults, and tumble into the water. I never saw anything funnier in my life."

"But, captain, won't they be drowned?" asked the cook anxiously, as he caught sight of the two boys' heads bobbing about in the water some yards astern of the boat.

"Not a bit of it, cookie," laughed the captain. "They

can both swim like seals, I know. See, they are making for the boat now. They're all right."

Sure enough the boys were already swimming towards the boat, where the sailors awaited them with outstretched arms, and in another minute they were both on board, save for the wetting no worse for the mishap.

They at once made their way back to the schooner, for there was no more whale hunting to be done that day. Rae seemed a good deal chagrined at the ludicrous termination of his enterprise: He hated being laughed at, and Captain Hanson thought the affair altogether too good a joke to be passed by in silence, so he indulged himself in a good deal of chaffing, until, seeing that Rae's self-control had about reached an end, he wound up with, "Oh, well, better fortune next time, Rae. You made a fine throw of the harpoon anyway, and that whale won't forget you in a hurry."

"No, nor I won't forget him," responded Rae ruefully. "I never had such a toss before, and I'm not anxious ever to have another, I can tell you."

Freckles said nothing at all. He had feared a scolding from the captain, although he was in no wise to blame; but there being no sign of this he held his peace, in spite of the efforts of the men on board to draw him out.

By noon the much-desired breeze appeared in full force, and Captain Hanson, eager to make up for lost time, clapped on all sail, and steered a straight course for Discovery Passage. His hope had been to reach there early in the afternoon, so as to have plenty of time to pass

through before dark, for it was a difficult piece of navigation. But the long morning's calm had upset his calculations, and it was not far from sundown when the *Plover* made the entrance to the passage.

Having been that way only once before, and then when the tide was at the full, and the getting through an easy matter, he had no knowledge save from the stories of the Indians, which he but half believed, of the dangers of the Yaculta Rapids in the middle of the passage. According to the Indians, these rapids were the home of an evil spirit that abode in these depths, and delighted to lay violent hands upon canoes, and to drag their occupants down to death. As a matter of fact, they were the centre of action of a maelstrom far more to be feared than the famous one of Norway. When the tide from the Gulf of Georgia ebbed out in full rush, the whole gorge would be white with foam, and filled with waves rising and breaking madly, while deep, black, funnel-shaped holes boring down into the water, and fountains boiling up like geysers, boded ill for the fate of any vessel, great or small, that might be so unfortunate as to be caught in this mighty whirlpool.

Borne on by the breeze, the little *Plover*, all unwitting of the perils ahead, kept her course steadily, and Captain Hanson was just about congratulating himself upon the progress made, and beginning to look around for a convenient cove wherein to anchor for the night, when the schooner rounding a bend in the passage came right upon the maelstrom, already working with menacing vigor.

At once the command was given to "about ship," and every effort was put forth to save the vessel from the grasp of the dread whirlpool. But it was too late. Already Yaculta, as the Indians called the supposed evil spirit, had hold of her keel, and, instead of moving away from the danger, the schooner drew swiftly nearer to it.

Realizing the futility of escape, Captain Hanson ordered down all the sails, and bidding every one lay hold of something that might serve to float them if the schooner sank, he added,—

"We're in a bad fix, and God knows how we'll get out of it. You must be ready for the worst. The *Plover's* a stanch little craft, but she's got a hard fight before her. We can only hope for the best. If she does go down perhaps we'll be able to scramble ashore somehow."

The prospect of accomplishing this seemed very frail indeed; and as Rae gazed in growing terror at the leaping waves and boiling swirls, into the midst of which they were helplessly speeding, he felt a pang of regret that he had ever left Fort Camosun at all.

But it was too late to do anything else than regret it now. They were all within the power of Yaculta, and could do nothing save pray for deliverance.

The schooner presently began to take on a circular motion, and the wisdom of the captain in ordering down the sails now manifested itself, for the violent swaying to and fro of the vessel threatened to tear the masts from their sockets; and if the sails had still been set, they assuredly would have gone by the board.

The *Plover* and her crew were in a perilous plight indeed. The violence of the whirl evidently increased instead of lessened. On every side great funnel-like pits opened in the water, any one of which seemed large enough to engulf the schooner; and to crown all, darkness was rapidly drawing near.

Possessed by a common fear, all the members of the vessel's company gathered about Captain Hanson at the stern, all distinction of rank being forgotten in the face of the awful danger they shared.

Rae grasped the captain's arm with one hand, and with the other took hold of Freckles. No one spoke. There was a strange fascination in the whirling, seething waters that paralyzed speech, if not thought itself.

Round and round the schooner spun, the circle of her orbit growing ever smaller, until it seemed as though there could be only one more turn and then she must plunge bow first into the glossy chasm yawning to receive her. But before this happened the whirlpool suddenly filled up, and she came to rest for a moment in a space of comparatively smooth water.

"Thank God!" ejaculated the captain; "I thought we must go down."

Yet the danger was not over. Another whirl formed almost immediately, that in its turn caught the unresisting schooner in its perilous embrace, and once more the terrifying motion was begun.

Never could Rae forget that experience. On either side of the passage the tree-clad shores were silently dark-

ening as night came on; beyond the sphere of the whirlpool the water lay still and smooth as glass; in the soft warm air the night hawks were already swooping this way and that, uttering their jarring notes; all was quiet and peaceful save where the sturdy little schooner struggled bravely with the fell might of the maelstrom, which strove with seeming diabolic zeal to drag her down into its fatal depths.

In its erratic course, as she was flung from one whirl to another, the *Plover* worked over towards the eastern side of the passage, until she approached so near that Captain Hanson thought he saw a chance of escape. Against either bulwark were lashed two great long sweeps, for use in event of it being necessary to move a short distance during a calm. In them now lay his hope of salvation for himself and his companions.

“Stand by to pull out the sweeps!” he cried. “Quick now, every one of you.”

The three sailors and the cook each sprang for a sweep, cut the lashings with their knives, and in a trice had the heavy things in the water and ready for use, with the fore and main stays doing duty as thole-pins.

“Give way now, my men, with all your might! Give way, I tell you!” was the next order. And keeping their balance as best they could on the rocking deck, the men bent to the oars, while the captain jammed the tiller hard-a-port, and the two boys held their breath in anxiety for the result.

For some minutes the whirlpool seemed to laugh at

their efforts, but presently the schooner showed some signs of responding to the double appeal of oars and rudder, noting which Captain Hanson cried with the ring of growing confidence in his tone : " She feels you ; she's moving right. Pull away, pull away ! Give it to her ! "

They did pull away, putting every ounce of muscle in their bodies into each stroke ; and Rae and Freckles joined their boyish strength to that of the two men nearest the stern.

" Keep it up ! " roared the captain, pressing hard on the tiller that seemed to be fighting with him for its freedom ; " we're gaining headway. "

Sure enough, so they were. The sweeps had been put in at a fortunate moment, and their influence slowly but steadily made itself felt. Little by little the schooner moved towards the outer ring of the whirl, until presently she was held by that circle alone.

Then shouting " Back water, port ! Pull hard, star-board ! " he swung the tiller round to the other side, and, responding to the pressure, the gallant little *Plover* edged herself clear out of the cruel whirlpool into the kindly placid water of a welcoming cove just before the last ray of light faded from the western sky and darkness fell upon all.

Exhausted by their tremendous efforts, the sailors barely had strength to let go the anchor before they flung themselves down on the deck, panting like hounds after a long chase.

Rae rushed up to the captain, and taking his big brown

hairy right hand between both of his, fairly hugged it in the energy of his joy.

“Oh, my goodness!” he exclaimed, “but that was a close shave, wasn’t it? I was sure that awful whirlpool was going to get us.”

“And I don’t mind allowing that I was somewhat of the same opinion myself, Rae,” responded Captain Hanson. “But a miss is as good as a mile; and now we’ve got out of it, we’ll take good care to stay out, I can tell you.”

Remaining in the cove all night, the *Plover* awaited the hour next day when the tide had reached its full height, obliterating all the treacherous whirls, and then taking advantage of a strong breeze blowing straight up the passage, she spread her white wings and sped swiftly out of the Yaculta’s realm, bearing away a remembrance of one awful hour there that would endure so long as memory lasted.

Working her way through Johnstone Strait into Queen Charlotte Sound, she safely threaded the intricacies of the Broughton Archipelago, and so came out into the open stretch at the head of Vancouver Island, where the good luck which had hitherto attended her course deserted her for a while, and she had to struggle against baffling head winds and through bewildering mists and fog that demanded all the seamanship and watchfulness of captain and crew to reckon with.

Rae found this part of the trip desperately dull. The drenching mists made staying on deck most uncomfort-

able, even though there had been anything to see or do there, and the small cabin felt very close and stuffy. His chief resource lay in his books, of which he had brought a box containing "Robinson Crusoe," "Arabian Nights," "Captain Cook's Voyages," and also the works of Shakespeare, Scott, and Milton; for his father, like most Scotsmen, possessed a fine literary taste, and had taken pains to cultivate Rae's interest in the great masters of literature, so that the boy had already learned to appreciate, in no small degree, the beauty and sublimity of their work.

Whenever Freckles had an hour to spare, Rae would read to him; and it was wonderful, in view of the small chance the boy had hitherto had of developing his intellect, how much he understood and enjoyed of the treasures in prose and poetry thus revealed to him for the first time.

He would listen to Rae with open mouth, eyes alight with intelligence, and heart throbbing with vivid interest; and whenever the reader paused—for his innate courtesy kept him from interrupting—he would have questions to ask that Rae was often sore put to to answer aright.

Indeed, sometimes he couldn't answer them to his own satisfaction, and would have recourse to Captain Hanson, who had a pretty well-stored mind; and in this way the man and the two boys were brought closer to one another, and their friendship made rapid progress.

Rae found no small pleasure in acting as Freckles's

teacher. Under his father's directions, and with his constant encouragement and aid, he had himself been educated in a way that, if it was not altogether in accordance with the usual scholastic methods, at least gave him a command of an amount of practical knowledge that many boys brought up in cities might well have envied.

The three R's he had long ago mastered, while in history, geography, and English literature he had made good progress. The best feature of his training was this—he had not merely learned enough to take rank with the ordinary schoolboy of his age, but he had imbibed the spirit of learning. He was always eager to know more about things. He had a strong ambition for intellectual as well as physical prowess.

In Freckles he found as earnest a scholar as teacher could desire, albeit the poor boy's utter lack of opportunity in the past made him surprisingly ignorant of many things that Rae thought he ought to know. Of course Rae could not always bear this in mind, and sometimes his patience would be overtried by Freckles's foolish answers or stupid questions.

But when he would say something sharp and stinging, instead of attempting to retort, Freckles would put both his hands to his face, after a fashion he had, as though he were trying to hide behind them, and murmur piteously, —

“Forgive Freckles; Freckles did not know better.”

Whereupon Rae's warm heart would swell with sym-

pathy, and he'd pull the boy's hands down, saying soothingly, —

“ Oh, don't mind me, I'm such a spitfire. Try again, now.”

So Freckles would make another attempt; and thus the teaching proceeded, with considerable benefit to Freckles at least.

CHAPTER X.

RASPBERRIES AND OULACHAN.

AS the *Plover* kept on her way to Milbank Sound, and the mists continued to hang about her, Captain Hanson often had recourse to a method of piloting that could hardly have been relied upon elsewhere.

The shores rose steep and rocky from the sea, and gave back a quick, clear echo to the voice, taking advantage of which the mariner, trusting to his acute senses, felt his course along by the way the sound of his hail was flung back to him. It was, to be sure, a rather dangerous method, to be attempted only by expert pilots; but Captain Hanson had faith in himself, and only once did his skill seem to fail him.

The fog had been particularly thick, and the breeze light and baffling, so that his patience had been tried to the utmost, and he had come as near to feeling reckless as was possible in one of his cautious nature. He was very anxious to reach Milbank Sound before nightfall, and so kept on one tack rather longer than was just wise.

Rae, in default of other amusement, had gone up to

the bow to watch the waves curling away from the schooner's cut-water; then tiring of this, he had crawled out on the bowsprit as far as he could, and strove to pierce the obscurity of the enfolding fog.

His position gave him the first glimpse of the danger ahead; and he had just time to turn and shout with all his might, "Captain Hanson, look out; we're running into something!" when right in front of the schooner there suddenly loomed out of the mist a great dark body that might have been the side of a mountain.

Instantly the captain put the helm hard-a-port, at the same moment roaring for the sailors to let go the main-sheet. The obedient schooner swung around as though on a pivot, until her sails flapped idly in the wind; and it was not a moment too soon, for there, so close that its shiny face might be touched from the deck with a long boat-hook, was a pinnacle of rock rising sharp and stern from the sea, one touch of which would have smashed the schooner's prow into kindling wood.

Captain Hanson drew a deep breath as the full sense of the deadly peril in which he and his companions had been came upon him.

"God bless your sharp eyes, my boy!" he exclaimed, turning to Rae. "I ought to have kept on hailing; but I thought we were clear in the middle of the entrance to the sound, and that I'd be only wasting my breath. Jerusalem! but that was a close shave! — I know you, you scoundrel," he cried. "You're one of those villanous needles that some old witch must have stuck here to

wreck good ships on. But you've not got us this time, and we'll give you a wide berth next time, I can tell you."

He had hardly spoken before, as if in obedience to the touch of a fairy's wand, the fog vanished to right and left, and Milbank Sound opened up bright and smiling on the port-bow, inviting immediate entrance, and offering immunity from the dangers and difficulties which had been besetting the schooner.

During the passage up the sound and through Graham's Reach, which divided Princess Royal Island from the mainland, Captain Hanson told Rae many stories of the Bella Bella Indians who inhabited that part of the coast, and bore the reputation of being a most treacherous, bloodthirsty, and turbulent tribe.

"There's nothing too mean or too cruel for these vermin," said the captain, who hated anything underhand, and had no respect for one who didn't fight fair. "They'll lie the hide off their tongues. They'd cheat a blind baby out of its rattle; and whenever they're in a big majority, they're ready to kill us white men on sight for nothing more than the tobacco in our pockets."

All this, of course, made Rae very curious to see some specimens of the Bella Bellas, provided no risk be run in doing so, and he was therefore well pleased when, as the schooner was lying becalmed one morning about half-a-mile off shore, a canoe was seen to emerge from a shadowy fiord, and make towards the vessel in a cautious, tentative way, as though its occupants were not at all sure of the reception they might have.

When the canoe drew near, Rae could not help admiring its fine lines and the curious carvings with which its bow was enriched. It had evidently been cut out of a single white cedar trunk, and was about twenty feet in length by two in breadth, with the gunwales flaring outwards so as to cast off the surge in rough water. Six men kneeled along the bottom two by two, and with strong strokes of their paddles sent the buoyant craft skimming through the water, while a seventh Indian sat in the stern steering skilfully.

“It’s perfectly amazing what the fellows will do in one of these canoes,” said the captain. “No storm scares them if they want to be afloat, and they’ll face a sea that I wouldn’t in the best ship’s boat I’ve ever seen. I wonder what they’re after this time. If they’ve any good furs I’ll not object to trying a little trade with them, so long as no more than three come aboard at once.”

The canoe having come within hailing distance, Captain Hanson mounted the poop, taking care to let his rifle, which he held in his hand, be plainly in sight, and shouted out a salutation he had learned on a previous voyage. The steersman of the canoe seemed surprised at the familiar words, but answered promptly, at the same time holding up a big beaver skin in token of his desire to trade.

The captain’s eyes glistened at this, and he beckoned the canoe alongside, saying to the steersman, —

“You come aboard alone. Let the others stay in the canoe.”

But the steersman did not like this idea. He appar-

ently feared treachery, and kept his seat, though still exhibiting the beaver skin and pointing to a pile of others in front of him.

“The rascal’s a good deal more afraid of us than we are of him,” laughed the captain. “Suppose you go on board the canoe, Rae, and act as go-between? I don’t want any of them up on deck if I can help it.”

Nothing loath, Rae clambered over the bulwark, and dropped into the canoe, rather to the astonishment of all its occupants, none of whom had expected this move. But their natural imperturbability was soon regained, and with expectant eyes, but silent lips, they awaited the next proceeding.

Captain Hanson now handed Rae down a couple of knives, and some of the trinkets which delight savage souls, and asked the Indian to lay beside them on the thwart the skins he was willing to give for them. At once the Bella Bella showed himself a good bargainer, for his offer was manifestly below the market rates along the coast; and Captain Hanson, not wanting to spend much time over the business, as the wind might spring up at any minute, said impatiently, —

“Come now, none of your nonsense; just double that quick or there’ll be no trading to-day.”

The Indian looked up for a moment with a fierce, resentful gleam in his eyes, then quietly put as many more skins on the pile.

“That’s more like it,” said the captain. “Now keep it up on that basis.”

So the trading went on until the stock of skins had passed from the hands of the Indians to the white men; and Rae was about to climb back on the schooner, when a sharp cry came from Freckles, —

“Look out for your knife, Rae!”

In imitation of the sailors, Rae wore at his side a sheath-knife of which he was very proud, and which he always kept as keen as a razor. All the time he was in the canoe one of the paddlers had been eying this knife with longing; and when Rae turned his back to climb up the schooner's side, he thought his chance had come.

But Freckles, whose fears had been excited by what Captain Hanson said concerning the evil character of the Bella Bellas, and who in consequence had watched Rae with some concern while the trading was going on, divined the savage's predatory purpose ere he had time to execute it, and uttered the cry of warning.

Rae did not wait to look around. He knew at once what Freckles meant, and, lashing out vigorously with his right foot, caught the would-be thief so cleverly under the chin as to tumble him over backwards across the canoe, which he infallibly would have upset had not the steersman instinctively thrown his weight to the other side, and thus maintained the balance.

Not pausing to take in the effect of his kick, Rae threw himself over the bulwark; and it was well he acted so promptly, for the Indian he had thus capsized, while still lying on his back, hurled his hatchet at him with murderous fury, and it stuck quivering in the very

spot where an instant before he had been balancing himself.

“Ah, you would, would you?” cried the captain fiercely at this wicked though futile effort; and pointing his rifle straight at the steersman, he roared, “Now get off with you as quick as you can! Do you hear me?”

He was both heard and understood. With faces full of sullen fury the Indians plied their paddles, and the swift canoe shot away from the schooner’s side.

“A good riddance of bad rubbish,” said the captain; and then pointing at the nice little pile of prime beaver skins on the poop, “But we’ve lost nothing by their acquaintance, that’s sure; and you, Rae, shall have the best skin in the pack to remember the Bella Bellas by, seeing you’ve come off with a whole skin yourself.”

Keeping steadily on, the *Plover* passed through Grenville Channel into Chatham Sound, and at last, one beautiful afternoon, reached the end of her trip at Fort Simpson, which occupied a commanding position on the north shore of the Tsimshian Peninsula.

The schooner arrived just as the great spring fishery of the oulachan, that remarkable little fish which is so highly esteemed by the Indian of this district, was drawing to a close, and Rae was astonished at the multitude of canoes which blackened the beach, and the number of lodges that surrounded the stockade. He had never seen so many Indians together in his life before, and their numbers somewhat appalled him.

“What a tremendous lot of them there is!” he said to

Captain Hanson, when the *Plover*, having safely avoided the many rocks and ledges which complicated the passage, had got to the wharf, and the Indians flocked down full of curiosity. "Do they always keep quiet, and never give any trouble?"

"Indeed that they don't," laughed the captain. "Why, they've attacked the fort half-a-dozen times, and tried to burn it down more than once, but they've always got the worst of it, and they're learning more sense. All the same, I wouldn't trust any of them any further than I could see them. They're a poor lot at best."

When Rae heard this he made up his mind that he would never go ashore without his pistol and knife in his belt, and that he'd take good care not to get out of sight of the fort unless he was with a party. His previous experience had taught him caution in this respect.

The scene around Fort Simpson was certainly a remarkable one. Fully ten thousand Indians were camped together within a mile radius, the principal tribe being the Tsimshians, to whom the whole peninsula belonged, although a score of other tribes were represented. What had brought them was the oulachan fishery, now nearly at an end; and the catch having been somewhat better than usual, they were all in high good-humor, and unstinted feasting and revelry were the order of the day.

As soon as the schooner had been properly berthed, Captain Hanson went up to the fort, taking Rae with him. They found the gate tightly closed, and sentinels with loaded rifles looking down upon them from the top of the

tall stockade ; for so long as the Indians were about the garrison acted as if a state of siege prevailed, and nobody was allowed to enter the gate until he had passed their inspection.

Of course Captain Hanson was admitted at once, and he and Rae received a warm welcome from the factor and his staff, who were exceedingly glad to have visitors from the south with the latest news.

While his elders talked business, Rae amused himself roaming about the enclosure, and comparing Fort Simpson with Fort Camosun, his conclusion being that although the former was certainly a very strong and well-built establishment, still his father's charge was upon the whole the best, and he would a great deal rather have his home there than amongst the Tsimshians.

Thus meditating, he came to a fence enclosing a primitive kind of garden whose principal product seemed to be raspberry bushes, of which there was quite a thicket under the lee of the lofty stockade.

The garden gate being open Rae ventured to enter, and on approaching the bushes was delighted to find them laden with berries the like of which he had never seen before.

He was both hungry and thirsty, and his mouth watered for the tempting fruit. "I must have some of those berries," he said to himself. "I wonder whose they are." He glanced around to see if there was anybody to ask, but beside the sentinels away over at the gate no one was in sight.

“There’s such a lot of them,” he went on, “they’ll never grudge me a few mouthfuls, so here goes ;” and without more ado he began to pick.

My, but how delicious they were ! Inch-long globes of crimson sweetness that had never known withering heat nor nipping cold, for the climate of the place is moist and warm like that of a greenhouse.

Rae’s first idea had been to eat only a few—just enough to cool his mouth and satisfy his sense of taste—but the very first berry that melted in his mouth banished that notion, and he attacked the bushes with a vigor that betokened a determination to make the utmost use of his opportunity.

He had about got well started, and, with both right and left hand going busily, was managing to keep his mouth luxuriously full, when suddenly there fell upon his ear in a harsh voice, with a decided Scotch accent, the demand,—

“Hi there, ma young callant ! wha telt ye ye micht be takin’ ma berries the noo ? ”

Rae gave a jump as though a bullet had hit him in the back, and, turning round, faced his questioner with a countenance whose burning blushes betrayed his confusion. It would have been utterly futile to feign innocence of berry-picking, even had he been disposed to do so, which, however, he was not ; for whatever other faults Rae had, there never could be any ground for doubting his veracity. With fingers and lips stained so deeply that they outvied his fiery cheeks, he stood silent.

He had been caught red-handed, and he was not going to aggravate the offence by proffering trumpery excuses.

The old Scotchman seemed somewhat taken aback at finding the despoiler of his garden to be an entire stranger; but immediately recovering himself, he approached Rae with so threatening a mien that the boy instinctively shrank back, and looked around anxiously for some way of escape.

Only one avenue was open. He must dart across the garden diagonally and leap the fence at the point furthest away from the old man, who was now within a few yards of him. To see his chance was to seize it. With the bound of a startled deer he sprang away, and before the gardener could turn to pursue him, he had reached the fence. It was not a high one, and, touching his hands upon its upper bar, he vaulted over it easily; and was about to continue his flight in the direction of the building where he had left Captain Hanson, when another man came round the corner of a storehouse near by, and the irate gardener shouted to him, —

“Haud that fellow, wull ye, Jock, till I come up wi’ ye?”

Whereupon the man with a quick rush caught Rae by the tail of his coat, and held him fast until the old Scotchman made his way around by the garden gate and hurried up to them, looking the very picture of wrath.

But what he would have said or done to Rae must remain only matter for conjecture, as just at this moment the factor of the fort, accompanied by Captain Hanson, appeared upon the scene, and at once inquired what all

the fuss was about. On being told by the gardener, who confidently counted upon the despoiling of his raspberry bushes being adequately avenged, instead of looking grave, he burst out laughing, and, laying his hand kindly on Rae's shoulder, said in a conciliatory tone to the indignant informer, —

“Why, Tammas, if you knew who this is you wouldn't be so wrathful. This is the son of your good friend, Mr. Finlayson, now factor at Fort Camosun. Surely you wouldn't deny him a helping of your fine berries.”

The change that came over the old man's grizzled countenance at this information was like the sun breaking through a dark bank of clouds on a chill autumn day.

“And sae ye're Rod Finlayson's bairn !” he exclaimed, taking hold of Rae's hands, and looking into his face as if to try and trace a paternal likeness there. “Weel, weel, had I but kenned it, you should have been fu' welcome to ilka berry in the bit garden. Yer faither was a guid frien' to me lang syne, and I'm verra sorry I spak sae uncouthly tae ye. But ye'll no be mindin' an auld man, and ye'll hae yer fill o' berries forby.”

And so saying, Tammas drew Rae back towards the garden ; and the boy, only too glad to finish his feast, went willingly along, without troubling himself to inquire why the old man held so high an opinion of his father.

It was not till he was returning to the schooner with Captain Hanson that he learned the particulars. It seemed that Tammas Saunders, who was one of the oldest employees in the Hudson's Bay Company's service on the

coast, was also one of the most difficult to manage, being given to occasional over-indulgence in drink, and not at all amenable to discipline at any time.

Of the different officials under whom he had served from time to time none had shown so much patience and forbearance as Mr. Finlayson, and finally, when dismissal by Chief Factor Douglas seemed inevitable, he had secured for him a commutation of the sentence to banishment to Fort Simpson, where employment as gardener was given him, and he behaved tolerably well.

For this reason he looked upon Mr. Finlayson as the best friend he had in the world, and in token of his regret for the rough treatment he had shown his son before being made aware of his identity, he appeared on the *Plover* early the next morning with a large pannikin heaped full of luscious berries.

“For the laddie’s breakfast,” he explained to Freckles; and when Rae came on deck, and accepted the offering with hearty thanks, the old man grew radiant, and said in an appealing way, “Ye’ll be tellin’ yer faither that Tammas Saunders wishes him weel, and was unco glaed to see his bonnie bairn.” Which, of course, Rae readily promised to do.

As soon as breakfast, including old Tammas’s timely and most acceptable contribution, had been despatched, preparations were made for taking part in the oulachan fishery, which had strongly enlisted Rae’s interest.

Captain Hanson and his men were all too busy unloading the schooner to attend to anything else, but Freckles was

at liberty; so the two boys went off together in the dingey, which they were perfectly competent to manage.

Rae had often seen oulachan oil, but not the fish itself, and he was very glad of the opportunity to make its acquaintance. It is a curious little fish about the same size as the Atlantic capelin, and having the same silvery appearance, but it has a distinctive delicate flavor when freshly caught, and it contains more oil than any other known fish. It melts like a lump of butter in the frying-pan, and often when dried, threaded with a spruce wick and stuck in a bottle, makes an excellent substitute for a candle. Hence its name of "candle-fish." Their numbers are enormous beyond all computation, and schools of them coming in from the sea will fill the mouth of the Nass River from bank to bank. The natives rake, shovel, dip, and sieve them by canoe loads, and either dry and string them, or press out their oil, and store it away for winter use. This was the fish that Rae was anxious to catch, and as the harbor fairly swarmed with them he ran no risk of disappointment.

As a fishing implement Rae had secured a strong dip-net which Captain Hanson happened to have, while Freckles, in default of anything better, had brought a long-handled dipper which he had slyly abstracted from the galley without the knowledge of the cook. Between the seats of the dingey was a large tub, that the boys felt sanguine of filling before they returned. So off they started in high spirits, each taking an oar.

All over the harbor were the Indian canoes, their occu-

pants busy gathering in the harvest of animated silver. It was a scene of intense activity and interest. The canoes, propelled by sinewy paddlers, darted hither and thither in keen pursuit of the schools of fish that in different directions gave the blue water the appearance of molten silver.

Nor was everything going as smoothly as might be desired. With their wonted greed and childish impatience the Indians were constantly coming into collision, and the still morning air resounded with shouts of anger and defiance as they squabbled over their quarry, although in good sooth there was enough and to spare for all.

“We’d better not get into the thick of it, Freckles, had we?” said Rae, eying the turmoil with some concern. “We’ll just keep outside the crowd, and pick up what fish we can.”

They accordingly rowed quietly along at some distance from the canoes, and contented themselves with picking up some of the fish that had broken away from the main body, and were darting about on their own account. They were having fairly good luck, but the tub was filling slowly, and as Rae could not regard with equanimity the prospect of returning to the schooner with it less than full, he kept moving the dingey nearer to the centre of activity, until presently they were right into the main body of the fish, and able to scoop them up freely.

This occupation was so absorbing that neither he nor Freckles took note of what was going on around them, so that they never could tell whether it was done accidentally or with malice prepense. At all events, just

when they were both stooping, Rae to empty his scoop net into the tub, and Freckles to get another dipperful of fish, a big canoe struck their boat heavily amidships, with the effect of causing both boys to take a sudden header, the one into the tub, the other into the water.

To a disinterested spectator the sight must have been extremely comical ; for Rae got his shoulders wedged in in such a way that for a minute or two he could not extricate himself, in spite of his frantic struggles, but stuck there with his legs waving in the air like danger signals ; while Freckles was so surprised at being precipitated right into the slippery shiny multitude of fish that, forgetting he could swim well enough, he thrashed round wildly, and shouted for help at the top of his voice.

Even the unusually staid savages, and particularly those on board the canoe which had been guilty of the collision, were moved to laughter, and suspended their fishing operations for a time to watch the fun.

Happily, there was no fear of any serious consequences ; for Rae, beyond a couple of slight bruises on his shoulders, and a liberal coat of fish scales and slime on his face, was none the worse for his wallowing in the tub, while Freckles quickly regained his self-control, and scrambled back into the boat again.

But oh ! how furious Rae felt. To submit to such an affront in silence was something of which his fiery nature was not capable, and the moment he regained his balance in the stern-sheets he proceeded to scold the Indians in right good fashion.



"A big canoe struck their boat heavily amidships."

“ You great stupid loons ! ” he cried. “ What did you mean by doing that ? We weren’t interfering with you in any way. You think you’re very clever, no doubt, to play such a trick upon a couple of boys. You wouldn’t dare do it if we were men,” and so forth, until his wrath had somewhat spent itself ; and then seeing that he might as well have been addressing the winds, so little effect did his tirade produce, he brought it to a rather lame conclusion by stopping in the midst of a sentence and bidding Freckles pull away, as they would go back to the schooner and leave the oulachan and Indians to themselves.

Rae returned to the *Plover* in a regular fit of the sulks, for he felt that his dignity had received an unmerited downfall, and that too in the sight of Freckles, which greatly aggravated the matter.

It was no mitigation of the affair that Freckles had shared in the unpleasant experience. He had no dignity to lose ; but with Rae, who liked to be looked up to by the other as a sort of hero, it was altogether different ; for a hero with his head in a tub of fish, and his legs frantically kicking in mid-air, could hardly command the respect appropriate to the character.

It was, therefore, some little time before Rae got back his wonted serenity, and meanwhile he wandered off alone along the shore with a heart full of longing to invent some way of getting even with the Indians.

But that evening, when, after dinner with the factor, he learned from his lips some of the thrilling experiences

the garrison had been through since the establishment of the fort in its present position, he came to the very wise conclusion that it was a case of discretion being the better part of valor.

Among all the stations established by the Hudson's Bay Company on that far western coast, none had had so large a share of danger as Fort Simpson. Again and again during the season of the oulachan fishing, when they were gathered in almost overwhelming numbers, had the Indians attacked it fiercely, more than once being nearly successful in burning it down.

Fortunately, however, owing to their utter lack of concerted action, and their wretched equipment of weapons of war, every attempt had been frustrated; and now they seemed to have learned wisdom, and to be willing to let the fort alone.

During the remainder of the stay of the *Plover*, Rae amused himself as best he could; and although the time hung rather heavily upon his hands, yet he made no further attempt at catching oulachan. The one experience he had had of that was sufficient to satisfy him for some time to come.

By the end of the week all the stores the schooner carried for the fort had been transferred to the warehouses, and their place taken by bales of furs to be brought down to Fort Vancouver. Then there was a farewell dinner at which the culinary resources of the establishment were taxed to their uttermost, and the following morning the *Plover* shook out her white wings, and with a favoring breeze began her homeward voyage.

Not until now did Captain Hanson mention to Rae a project that he had been nursing for some time past.

“I’ve been thinking, Rae,” he said, as the two sat together in the stern, while the schooner, with every inch of canvas drawing to the full, cut her way through the white caps, “that it might be a fine thing to run over to the Queen Charlotte Islands and do a bit of trading with the Haidas. You see there’s no particular hurry about our getting back, and the weather’s sure to be fine yet for a month anyway, and we’ve got a lot of things still on hand yet that the Indians would like very much to have; and so taking it altogether, it’s pretty clear in my mind that it would be a good notion to see if those Haidas haven’t got some pelts that would pay for the trouble of going after them. If there have been no Russian vessels down to them lately, they’ll be pretty sure to have some others. Now what do you say, my boy? Are you beginning to feel homesick, or would you like to see something of the Haidas?”

Rae did not keep the captain waiting long for his answer. Eager as he was to see his father again, the prospect of seeing the Haidas, those famous freebooters of the coast, of whose warlike exploits he had heard many stirring tales from his father and others, was altogether too attractive to his adventurous spirit not to reconcile him to a slight postponement of his return to Fort Camosun.

“Why, captain,” he said promptly, “I say go to the Queen Charlotte Islands by all means. I’ve heard lots of

stories about the Haidas, and I'm longing to see some of them. Oh, I hope you'll go over there. It won't take very long, will it?"

"Oh no, it won't take us more than a week out of our course at the most," answered the captain; "and if the luck's with us, and we get a good otter skin or two, we'll think well of ourselves for making the trial."

So the diversion to the Queen Charlotte Islands was quickly decided, and the *Plover's* course changed to a more westerly one accordingly.

As was always the case when full of some new idea, Rae could talk of nothing else but the Haidas, and he fairly showered questions upon Captain Hanson, who, to tell the truth, had not much information to give, having never visited the islands before, although the thought of doing so had entered his mind on previous voyages. Little did Rae imagine as they drew near the home of the Haidas how eventful this visit would turn out to be, and how it would postpone his return to Fort Camosun for more months than the days of the captain's calculation.

CHAPTER XI.

TO THE QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS.

TO reach the Queen Charlotte Islands from Fort Simpson, the *Plover* had to make her way out of Chatham Sound, passing between Dundas and Stephen Islands into the broad expanse of Hecate Strait, and then strike almost directly across for Skidegate Inlet, which affords the best entrance to both Graham Island on the north and Morseby Island on the south.

Such fine weather had fallen to the schooner's lot hitherto that those on board her took it for granted the same good fortune would attend them in their detour, but in this expectation they were to be grievously disappointed. They had not long left the protection of the archipelago through which they had been pursuing their course for so many weeks before the north wind, as though it had been only waiting for its opportunity, fell upon them fiercely.

The sea rose to a height it could never attain in the sheltered straits, and the sturdy little vessel, with only a triple-reefed jib and foresail set, leaped gallantly from billow to billow, again and again burying her nose in the

foaming mass, and being saved from a smothering only by the splendid seamanship of Captain Hanson, who tended the wheel himself, and never took his eyes off the bow.

A wilder storm Rae had never experienced, and his heart sank as the schooner staggered on through the seething waters, the little canvas she carried threatening every minute to tear the groaning mast from its socket, or to be blown away from its own grummets like a puff of smoke.

Freckles, who was not by any means born for a sailor, tried to keep on deck for a while, as all the others were there, but soon his courage failed him, and he crawled below, where he could not see the tumult of the waters, however much he might feel it.

Creeping carefully up beside the captain, Rae ventured to suggest, —

“Hadn’t we better turn back, captain, and not try to get over to the islands?”

Without moving his eyes from the bow, Captain Hanson answered in a voice of unusual gruffness, —

“Turn back is it? and how do you think we’re to manage that when it takes all I know of sailing to keep the schooner on her keel as it is?”

Rae didn’t understand why the *Plover* couldn’t keep on her keel just as well if she were beating back to Chatham Sound as if she continued on to the Queen Charlotte Islands; but, as the tone of the captain’s answer implied that he ought to be able to see for

himself why the former course was impracticable, he deemed it better to say nothing more in the matter, and laying hold with both hands of a friendly belaying-pin, he strove to keep his footing on the deck despite the pitching and rolling of the schooner.

Running straight before the wind, as she was doing, the *Plover* was threatened with a double danger. The wind, whose violence showed no signs of abating, threatened to carry away one or both of her masts, and the huge billows, with which she seemed to be running a mad race, were eager to spring upon her from astern.

Captain Hanson thoroughly understood the situation, and certainly no man could have shown more skill and promptness of action in avoiding both dangers. Indeed, after a while, when he had again and again by a quick turn of the wheel evaded an on-rushing sea or saved the hard-pressed mast, he began to grow more confident of his powers, and to find a kind of fierce pleasure in this struggle with the elements that seemed so bent upon overwhelming him and his companions.

“The *Plover* will weather it right enough,” he said to Rae, an exultant expression relaxing the hitherto stern fixedness of his face. “She’s a saucy craft, and in my hands a match for any gale.”

That moment Rae happened to glance astern, and what he saw caused his eyes to start from his head with fright.

“Look, captain, look ! quick !” he cried in the shrill accents of terror.

The captain turned his head, and beheld a huge billow

that seemed to tower half-way to the top of the mainmast rearing its snowy, seething crest right behind, and ready to topple over upon them.

“Great heavens!” he exclaimed, throwing himself upon the wheel with all his strength, and spinning it round in his hands.

But he was just a moment too late. With an awful roar the great wave broke upon them, flooding the schooner’s deck from stern to stem, and sweeping away everything that was not lashed fast.

Both he and Rae were smitten to the deck by the irresistible onset of the billow. Happily, however, they kept their places, the one holding on to the wheel and the other to a coil of rope that hung to the belaying-pin, and the instant the deluge had passed over them Captain Hanson was on his feet again issuing orders to the half-drowned sailors, that they hastened to obey as best they could.

The saucy little *Plover* had been “pooped”—that worst of all disasters that can befall a vessel—and whether the relentless billows would prove her deathblow or not would soon be manifest. The cabin had been filled with water, as was inevitable, driving poor Freckles out on deck again, where he lay almost flat on his breast, lifting a pitiful face up to the captain, as though to say,—

“O captain, is it all over with us? Will we never see land again?”

If the hold was as full as the cabin, the schooner must founder, for she could never hold her own against the

gale in that condition. The sailors were ordered to try the pumps. They did so vigorously, and to their vast relief ascertained that there was hardly any water in the hold at all; upon which cheering information being communicated to Captain Hanson, he gave a hoarse chuckle, and a new light came into his face.

“Hurrah! the *Plover's* days are not over yet. Let out a reef in that foresail. There'll be no more pooping if I can help it.”

The reef being let out, the schooner at once responded to the pressure of the additional canvas; and although the mast seemed as if it would break off short, it held notwithstanding, while the vessel, in spite of her added burden of water, bounded over the waves triumphantly.

That tremendous billow seemed to have been the storm's supreme effort, for, soon after, its violence began to abate, and ere evening fell the worst had passed, and there was nothing more to be feared from that quarter.

Captain Hanson thought it wise to lay to during the night, as he did not know how far out of his course the gale might have blown him; and when he took his reckoning next morning he found his wisdom proved by the discovery that he was a long way south of Skidegate Inlet, and would have to beat back against a head wind.

This would have been sufficient to cause a less determined man to change his plans, and keep on his way home instead of proceeding to the islands. But the captain had a good spice of obstinacy in him, and was not to be turned

aside from his purpose by an ordinary gale, even though it had included a very narrow escape from being "pooped."

So the schooner was put about, and all that day thrashed through the waves, making somewhat slow but steady progress towards Skidegate. As they stood off and on from the coast, which they made about mid-day, Rae was busy with his glass sweeping the shore in hopes of discovering some signs of human life. But nothing of the kind was visible, and at last, feeling much disappointed, he asked Captain Hanson if the islands were really inhabited.

"I can't for the life of me make out anything that looks like people being on the land. Surely there'd be camps or something, wouldn't there?" he said, in an impatient tone.

"Ah, Rae," laughed the captain, "you're too eager altogether. Do you expect the Haidas to be waiting for us in their canoes when they've no idea we're coming? Faith, you'll not have to look long for camps or canoes either once we get into Skidegate Inlet."

And, sure enough, no sooner had they made the entrance and passed a little way up than on either side groups of Indian habitations came into view, and a number of canoes were paddled rapidly towards them.

"There now, Rae," said the captain, "will that satisfy you?"

"Indeed it will," said Rae. "Why, what a lot of them there are!"

By the time the schooner had come to anchor she had been surrounded by a cloud of canoes containing men, women, and children full of curiosity with regard to the new-comers, and Rae, from the vantage point of the bulwarks, had a fine opportunity to study them in return.

He was at once struck by their marked superiority in general appearance to any Indians that he had ever met before. Their skin, instead of being dark and dirty, was of a clear olive tint, and their features were finer in their lines, while their bodies were tall and well formed. Their hair was black and coarse, and it was noticeable that the faces of the men were as smooth as those of the women, owing to the practice of pulling out the moustache and beard as soon as they began to show themselves.

The canoes, too, in which they had come out were finer than ordinary, being fashioned out of single logs of red cedar, with pointed bows and flaring gunwales, and richly carved and colored. Some were capable of carrying forty persons, while others were light and small, for the use of only two paddlers. Nearly every canoe had a full load, and the chattering of their occupants as they commented upon their visitors was like that of a multitude of parrots.

That the savages had not entire confidence in their white brothers was manifest from the fact that they evidenced no desire to be allowed on board. On the contrary, they kept off at a slight distance, as though perchance they feared the crew of the *Plover* might attempt to jump into their canoes.

At the outset Captain Hanson found himself faced by the problem of holding communication with the Haidas. The dialect they spoke had little in common with any of those on the mainland with which he was familiar, and none of his men had ever seen a Haida before.

He must needs fall back upon the sign language, therefore, and this he at once put into vigorous use. At first the Indians seemed puzzled, but after a while they showed more intelligence, and ventured to reply in their own fashion, with the result that some sort of an understanding was reached.

The captain made clear his desire to trade, whereupon the Haida whose dress and appearance betokened superior rank invited him to go on shore, and he accepted the invitation, taking Rae with him and also two of the sailors; the other two, with the cook and Freckles, being left in charge of the schooner, with instructions to allow no Indians to come on board on any account.

All four of those going on shore were armed to the teeth, not so much because Captain Hanson anticipated having recourse to the weapons, but rather that their appearance might induce respect and let the natives see that their visitors were not to be trifled with or imposed upon.

As Rae looked about him upon landing, his attention was at once claimed by what is the most characteristic feature of all Haida villages—namely, the wonderful and mysterious carved posts, which stood in front of every dwelling. No other aboriginal people have anything like

these posts. In Skidegate village each house—for the Indians live in regular houses, not in tents—had at least two such erections in front, and they were all different as to size, height, and carvings.

“Why, captain,” exclaimed Rae, as his eye wandered from one to the other of these posts down the long line that ran from end to end of the village, “what are those things, and what do they mean? I never saw anything like them before.”

“No more did I,” responded the captain, “and to tell what they’re for is beyond me. Perhaps the people worship them when they’ve got nothing else to do.”

Rae’s curiosity was so stirred that this indefinite reply did not content him; so he turned to a young Haida, and, pointing to a particularly fierce-looking post which bore on its head two gigantic grotesque heads adorned with huge horns, shouted in his ear as if he were deaf,—

“What is that for? Can you tell me?”

The Indian started at the question, and an ugly look came into his face, as though he suspected Rae of making fun of either him or the post. He shook his head very decidedly, and moved away in evident ill-humor.

“I guess you’d better not press that question, Rae,” said Captain Hanson, whose quick eyes seemed to miss nothing that transpired. “Perhaps he doesn’t understand you. Anyway, they are a suspicious lot, and ready enough to take offence, so don’t ask many questions.”

Rae fully concurred in the wisdom of the captain’s

counsel, yet as they passed one after another of these strange posts, with their carved faces and elaborate decorations, he did long to ask some one what they all meant.

Next to the posts, what impressed him most was the size and solidity of the Haida houses. They all stood in a long row with their gable ends to the beach, which indeed served as the street of the village, and were constructed of great slabs of cedar laid upon stout posts driven deep into the earth. Some of them were more than fifty feet in breadth at the front, and ran back as far, while the roof ridge rose nearly twenty feet above the floor.

But, as Rae soon learned, so large a house was the abode of more than one family. In fact, four or five families would share its accommodation, being all related, and having as the head of the household the oldest male member of the group.

Following their guide, the four white visitors were brought to a house that occupied a commanding site in the centre of the village. Before it stood the two largest carved posts of all, quite startling affairs, being huge human faces crowned with gigantic hats of a kind that no London hatter ever put upon the market.

This was evidently the palace of the chieftain, and they were now to have audience with him, their guide striving to impress upon them as best he could by means of signs that the chief was a most important personage, and that they must not fail to do him appropriate honor.

Rae did not take this in, and Captain Hanson had not

time to explain what was meant before they all found themselves in the great man's presence. The room being imperfectly lighted by a hole in the roof, it took the visitors some few minutes to get their bearings.

When their eyes had become accustomed to the gloom, they saw before them, squatting upon a raised platform at the farther end of the spacious chamber, an old man, who presently rose to his feet and extended his arms with the palms turned up, evidently in token of greeting.

Captain Hanson at once imitated him, at the same time bowing low, and the sailors followed suit; but Rae was so taken up with gazing at the chief and his surroundings that he never moved.

It must be said that there was good excuse for the boy's failure to make a proper obeisance, for certainly the old chief was no ordinary being in point of appearance. His stature was above the common, his body thin and spare, yet his limbs were strong and muscular. His eyes were large and goggling, seeming ready to start out of their sockets. His forehead was deeply wrinkled, not merely by age, but from a continual frown; all of which characteristics, joined to a long visage, hollow cheeks, high cheek-bones, and a decidedly ferocious expression, made him look to Rae most uncomfortably like some sort of a bogey man.

He was clothed in a kind of cloak greatly prized among the Haidas, which they obtained in trade from the Tshimians. It was shaped somewhat like a shawl, with a blunt point behind, and surrounded by a thick fringe of twisted

wool. Finely shred cedar bark had been used as a warp for this cloth, on which the wool of the mountain goat had been worked in with a very excellent effort. Like Joseph's coat that got him into so much trouble, it was made of many colors, black, brown, yellow, and white predominating, and each color being a separate piece artfully sewn to the others, so that no seam was visible. On his head was a turban of shred cedar bark twisted together, stained a dull red, and decorated with the orange-colored bills of the puffin and some brilliant feathers. Altogether he was quite an imposing-looking figure, and his attendants could hardly be blamed for feeling incensed at Rae's neglect to do him reverence.

As neither the chief nor the captain knew a word of each other's language, and there was no one to interpret, conversation could not be otherwise than extremely limited; yet by dint of vigorous gesticulations, and much dramatic action, they did succeed in making mutually plain the fact that they were both eager for trade, and that the chief had a lot of fine furs to barter for the captain's goods.

This being settled, the chief, assuming as genial an expression as his ferocious countenance was capable of manifesting, gave some orders to the women, who had all the time been grouped about his primitive throne eying the visitors with glances of shy curiosity, and they disappeared at the back, returning soon with wooden platters heaped high with food, which was placed before their guests.

Rae glanced questioningly at Captain Hanson as though to say, "It's queer-looking stuff; must we eat it?"

And the captain answered his look by saying in an undertone, "You must eat some of it, or they'll be mortally offended."

The viand in question proved to be halibut, which was the main article of food among the Haidas. It had been roasted in strips before an open fire, and albeit somewhat smoked and lacking in basting, still it did not taste so very ill, and Rae, by a great effort, managed to gulp down a few mouthfuls, although not nearly enough to content the hospitable desires of the hosts.

Little did he imagine as he then made his acquaintance with Haida halibut, and to the bottom of his heart hoped he might never see anything more of it, that in the days to come he would have to make many a meal off the same thing, and indeed, at times, be very glad to get enough of it to satisfy his appetite.

After the halibut came some kind of berries soaked in oulachan grease that the Indians evidently regarded as a great dainty, but with which the white men could do nothing; and then the feast being ended, Captain Hanson signified his desire to withdraw.

The chief apparently wished to prolong the interview, but the whole party were anxious to get out into the fresh air again, and so they took their departure, Rae this time remembering to make his bow with as much formality as the captain himself.

On their way back to the boat they were attended by a crowd of curious natives, who watched their faces keenly, as though they would read therein the impression their village and themselves made upon the visitors; and it thus fell to Rae's luck to once more give offence by being moved to laughter at the sight of some women who were standing beside two of the carved posts.

Not content with tattooing their cheeks and decorating their dress with shells and bits of bright metal, these tawny belles had sought to increase their beauty by inserting their very largest labrets in their lips, and hanging curious-looking ornaments to their noses. The labrets, which caused the lower lips to protrude far out over the chin, were hideous enough in themselves, but the nose appendages were altogether too much, and Rae, forgetting that although their new acquaintances could not understand his speech they could interpret his actions with an accuracy that went far to make up therefor, nudged Captain Hanson with his elbow, and indicating the Haida ladies by a glance in their direction, said, with a smile of mingled amusement and pitying contempt, —

“Just look there, captain. Did you ever see such guys? And to think that they imagine that makes them beautiful! Ugh! it makes them look more like pigs than human beings.”

Without thinking, Captain Hanson looked as directed, and at once the appropriateness of Rae's simile appeared to him so strongly that he could not resist smiling at the

pitiful frights into which the poor women had been converted by their savage adornments.

But the next moment the sudden darkening of the faces of the men around showed him that both he and Rae had been wanting in discretion, and grasping his companion's arm with a vigor that caused him to look up in surprise, he said in a tone that showed some agitation, —

“See here, my lad, you mustn't make remarks on these people. They guess pretty sharply at what you mean, and it riles them, so just be careful, and whatever you think, keep it to yourself until you're back on board the *Plover*.”

Rae rather resented being thus sat upon, so to speak, and it made him sulky for a time, so that he had no disposition to indulge in further remarks; but by the time they had got back to the schooner this little cloud had vanished, and when Freckles met him at the bulwarks with welcoming grin, he made up for his temporary silence by shouting out, —

“O Freckles, but they're a queer lot! you never saw such odd-looking folks in your life. The women wear rings on their noses just like pigs, and stick saucers in their lips to make them pretty.”

Freckles was, of course, eager to learn all about it, and Rae regaled him with a picturesque account of what he had seen, which the boy appreciated highly, and which made him full of eagerness to get ashore, and see some of those curious sights for himself.

He expressed this desire to Rae, who at once approved

and promised to arrange the matter with Captain Hanson.

“If the captain isn’t going off himself to-morrow, I’ll ask him for the dingey, and we’ll go on our own account. We might have some fun, you know.”

“Oh, that will be fine !” exclaimed Freckles, clapping his hands. “Do you think the captain will let us go ?”

“Of course he will, if I ask him,” said Rae, looking most consequential ; “and we’ll take some trinkets with us, and try to do some trading.”

When Captain Hanson came on deck the following morning, he found his schooner fairly besieged by a multitude of canoes, many of whose occupants held up bundles of furs the moment he appeared, and by their gesticulations made it plain that they were anxious to barter them off for what he might have to give in exchange.

Not wishing to seem too eager to purchase, he told them to wait, that he was not ready to attend to them just then, and proceeded to take his breakfast in a leisurely fashion, while the impatient savages clustered closer to the vessel, and kept up a continuous chattering in their own tongue.

Having finished his breakfast and smoked his pipe the captain was ready for work, and gave orders that the goods he had to barter should be brought up on deck, and spread out on the poop. He still had a good assortment of hatchets, kettles, tin pans, brass chains, glass beads, and other articles dear to the savage heart ; and these being duly set forth in the poop, he invited two of

the occupants of the nearest canoe to come on board with their pelts, and begin business.

They showed some hesitation at first, evidently preferring to remain in their canoes ; but after a little persuasion climbed over the bulwarks, bearing bundles that made Captain Hanson's eyes glisten when they were opened before him, for their contents were nearly all sea-otter skins of large size and fine quality, worth many dollars apiece, and if he had to give his entire stock of goods for simply the two bundles he would make a profitable trade.

But if the furs pleased the captain, much more did his goods delight the savages. The sight of so many articles that they coveted heaped together in such profusion filled their souls with the desire for possession, and they were ready to barter away everything they owned, including their wives if need be, to secure the treasure before them.

But of course Captain Hanson was not going to allow the first pair of purchasers to corner the market ; so having carefully examined the skins they brought, and put his own valuation upon them, he laid beside them a lot of things — a couple of hatchets, two tin pans, an iron kettle, and so forth — and signified that that was what he would give for the furs.

At first the savages protested vigorously, and sought with their own hands to add more articles to the pile ; but the captain promptly stopped that, and made it clear that he would not increase his offer ; whereupon they grew sulky, and pretended that they had lost all desire for trade, rolling up their skins again to take them away.

But Captain Hanson was not the man to be fooled by any such shallow artifice as that, and, lighting his pipe, he sat himself placidly down until his customers should come round to his way of thinking.

They hesitated and hung about, exchanging counsel in a low tone, and even made as though they would return to their canoes ; but, the captain continuing impassive, they finally gave up the attempt to have their own way, and throwing down the furs again, proceeded to pick up the different articles offered in exchange, and to hand them over to the other occupants of their canoe. Then they took themselves off with frowns of disappointment still beclouding their tawny faces.

As soon as they were gone two others were allowed on board, and these went through pretty much the same process of bargaining, without gaining any more by it than their predecessors had done. It was while they were in the midst of this that Rae took the opportunity to ask Captain Hanson if he and Freckles might go ashore in the dingey ; and the captain's attention being absorbed in the business, he replied without clearly understanding the purport of the question, "All right ; but don't go far, and be back soon." Whereupon Rae ran off joyfully to make preparation for the shore-going.

Being anxious to effect as profound an impression as possible, Rae accoutred himself as though he were going on some warlike expedition. His powder-flask and bullet-pouch were hung across his shoulders, in his belt were his pistols and hunting-knife, and in his hand his rifle,

while Freckles he provided with another rifle and the necessary ammunition.

Off went the two in high spirits, Rae answering one of the sailors who asked him what he was going to do, —

“Oh, I’ll tell you when I get back. We’re going to have some fun, anyway.”

“Well, take good care of yourselves, my boys,” was the response, “and don’t let the Indians keep you.”

“Oh, not much fear of that,” laughed Rae carelessly; “we’ll be back in good time for dinner.” Then turning to Freckles he added, “Give way now; let’s lose no time,” and off they rowed toward the shore, little dreaming what strange and varied experiences were in store for them, and how many days would pass before they would again have dinner with people of their own kind.

While the boys were rowing ashore the bartering went on busily aboard the schooner, Captain Hanson feeling tempted to hug himself after each batch of his customers went away at having made one more excellent bargain. Had he taken time to be more observant he could hardly have failed to notice a rather strange thing — to wit, that the Indians, as soon as they disposed of their furs, went straight back to the village, not to remain there, but to return almost immediately fully armed with spears and bows and clubs.

They did not approach the *Plover*, but kept together in a group about a hundred yards away, as if biding their time for some purpose they all clearly understood.

The trading took up the whole morning, and in the

meantime Rae and Freckles had landed on the beach before the chief's dwelling, drawn up the dingey, and started out on their adventures. Rae greatly enjoyed filling the post of guide, and took care that Freckles should miss nothing of interest as they strolled along. The wonderful carved posts, the large and substantial dwellings, so different from and superior to the ordinary Indian lodges, the curiously tattooed faces of the men, and the hideously ornamented features of the women — these and other things were observed and commented upon with lively interest.

Nobody addressed them, or made any overture in that direction, although they in their turn were the objects of many keen glances; and had they been on the look-out for anything of the kind they could hardly have failed to notice that here and there the men were gathered in little knots, talking in low tones, and casting meaning looks at the boys.

They continued their walk to the very end of the line of dwellings, and then were about to retrace their steps, when a gaily-dressed Indian boy about their own age appeared at the doorway of the last house, and made signs for them to enter.

Freckles took no notice and kept on, but Rae halted.

“ Shall we go in ? ” he asked, more as a matter of form than otherwise, for his own mind was already made up.

“ Do you think we better ? ” inquired Freckles, who had begun to feel rather ill at ease where everything was so strange, and to wish himself back on board the schooner.

“Just for a minute. I want you to see the inside of one of their houses; come along,” was Rae’s response; and grasping Freckles’s arm he moved towards the lad, whose sallow face lighted up as he saw his invitation being accepted.

Following him, the boys presently found themselves in the midst of a number of men and women, who looked at one another with significant smiles. They were escorted to the platform at the other end, which was the place of honor, and were no sooner seated than several young girls appeared bearing platters of baked halibut, boiled salmon, and berries dipped in oulachan grease.

It was too soon after breakfast for the boys to eat anything, even for manners’ sake, so they firmly refused; and then, there being nothing else to do, sat in silence, feeling very awkward, and regretting that they had come in.

Rae had just made up his mind to get away when the report of a rifle fell on his ears.

“Hello!” he cried; “what’s up? Let’s go out and see,” and he started for the door.

But the instant he moved, and Freckles with him, half-a-dozen of the Indians sprang before them to bar their exit. They were captives in the hands of the Haidas!

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE HANDS OF THE HAIDAS.

THE first shock of surprise at finding his way out of the dwelling opposed by savages, whose grim faces showed only too plainly that what they were doing was not by way of a joke, or of over-zealous hospitality, but in dead earnest and with threatening intent, brought Rae to a sudden halt, and for a moment he looked at the men before him in silence. Then the full sense of his danger coming upon him, he made a sudden plunge between the two just in front, bending low and almost going upon his hands.

It was a clever trick, learned in the game of chase that he used to play with the half-breed boys at Fort Vancouver, and had he had only those two men to reckon with, it would have succeeded, and he would have reached the door of the dwelling.

But behind them was an old hag, having a heavy piece of wood in her hand, and, when she saw Rae's stratagem, and while he was still bent forward, she lifted her club and brought it down with brutal force upon the back of his head.

Over on his face he went, as lifeless apparently as the bit of wood which had felled him, while poor Freckles, who was already held tight in the grip of a stalwart Haida, and was making no effort to free himself, set up a piteous cry of fright.

“Oh, you’ve killed him, you’ve killed him!” he shrieked. “Oh, you wicked, wicked men, you’ve killed him, and he never did you any harm!”

Now it was by no means the policy of the Indians to kill their prisoners. They had other purposes in view, and when the man who evidently exercised chief authority in the dwelling saw what the old woman had done, he went up to her and administered a tremendous box on the ear, that nearly tumbled her over in her turn. Then bending over Rae he picked him up quite tenderly, and bore him to his own bed, upon which he placed him gently, issuing some orders to the women as he did so.

They at once hurried to bring water, with which the Indian splashed Rae’s face liberally, and in a few minutes the boy’s eyes opened, and he gave a look around of bewilderment and alarm, in the course of which he caught sight of Freckles.

“What’s the matter, Freckles?” he asked anxiously, raising himself on the bed; “what are they doing to us?”

Poor Freckles, with eyes brimming over and lip trembling, managed to stammer out, —

“They’ve taken us prisoners, and I don’t know what they’re going to do with us.”

With a groan Rae fell back upon the bed, for his head gave him agonizing pain.

“ Oh, where’s Captain Hanson ? ” he murmured. “ Why didn’t he come after us ? Why did we come ashore alone ? ”

Had he been able to look out upon the inlet he would have seen something calculated to make him feel even worse than he did, for with all sail set the *Plover* was speeding away towards the open sea, chased by a swarm of canoes, whose occupants vainly strove to stay her progress, or to pick off her crew with their arrows.

This is what had happened while Rae and Freckles were in the house which now held them as captives. As has been already stated, each canoe when it had completed its trading went ashore, and its occupants, having carried their acquisitions to their homes, immediately returned fully armed, and took up their station not very far from the schooner, where they waited silently with an evident purpose.

When all the trading was over, much whispered consultation might have been observed among the Indians; and presently the canoes spread out, as if to encircle the schooner.

It was this movement which first attracted Captain Hanson’s attention. At the first glance he perceived that mischief was brewing, and diving down into the cabin promptly reappeared with his rifle, bidding each of the men to get his own immediately. They obeyed with alacrity, and in a trice the four men with loaded rifles

were standing together at the stern ready for battle, if that was what the savages meant.

When the latter saw that their evil design had been suspected they were thrown into confusion, and seemed afraid to advance, seeing which, Captain Hanson, who realized that there was not a moment to be lost, having discharged his rifle into the air, gave orders for the anchor to be slipped and the sails hoisted.

Both commands were executed while the Indians still hung off irresolutely. They were all eager enough to take possession of the vessel and plunder her of the many things they had not been able to purchase with their furs, but not one of them was anxious to lose his precious life in the transaction; and they knew well enough that if they attempted to board, those dreadful rifles would be sure to make short work of at least one apiece.

So making the welkin ring with fierce cries and angry imprecations, that would have had no effect upon the white men even if they could have understood them, which, however, they didn't in the least, they moved this way and that way, as though trying to evade Captain Hanson's keen eyes.

Meantime the sails rose into place, and there being a strong breeze from the east blowing through the inlet, the *Plover* began to move before it at a rate that would soon distance the canoes.

Not until now did Captain Hanson bethink himself of Rae. He had been so engrossed with the trading, and then startled with the sinister stratagem of the Haidas,

that he had not thought of anything else until the danger from attack was practically over.

“Where’s Rae?” he demanded suddenly of the cook, who was standing nearest to him of the men; “I haven’t seen him for some time. Is he down in the cabin?”

“No, sir, he’s on shore,” answered the cook; “he and Freckles went off in the dingey an hour ago about.”

“Great heavens!” exclaimed the captain; “I remember now his asking my leave when I was so busy. I hardly took in what he was saying; and he’s a prisoner now, sure’s I’m born. What is to be done?” and he looked back at the fast receding village as though he thought of turning about and going to Rae’s rescue. But the next moment he shook his head despairingly.

“No,” he muttered to himself; “it’s no use. We’re no match for them as we are. They’d only make prisoners of the whole of us, if they didn’t kill us. I must get down to Fort Camosun as quick as I can, and come back here with enough men and guns to scare those rascals out of their wits. God grant they do the boys no harm in the meantime.”

And so with heavy heart the captain kept on his way, feeling like a coward for thus apparently leaving the boys to the mercy of the cruel Haidas, yet realizing clearly enough that it would be utter folly with his little handful of men to attempt a rescue.

When Rae’s senses fully returned, and he understood the situation into which his undue enterprise had brought himself and Freckles, he was the most miserable of boys;

and when the chief took him to the door and showed him the white sails of the *Plover* just vanishing at the mouth of Skidegate Inlet, his feelings could be no longer controlled. Throwing himself down upon the ground, he buried his face in his hands, while his whole frame shook with violent sobs.

"They've deserted us," he moaned; "we're left here alone. Oh, what will father do when the *Plover* gets back without me?"

Freckles did his best to act as comforter, but his efforts were all in vain until the passion of Rae's grief had somewhat spent itself. Then the latter became more composed, and the two had a talk together, which they felt free to do, as none of the Indians could understand a word of their language.

"We're in a bad fix, Freckles," said Rae mournfully; "and there's no knowing when we'll get out of it. And it's all my fault too. I'm always getting into some kind of a scrape. But I tell you what it is, Freckles, if we ever get safe back to Fort Camosun, I'll take better care of myself for the future."

"Oh, we'll get back some time," responded Freckles cheerfully; and to the boy's credit be it observed that he showed a remarkable degree of fortitude in face of the danger that threatened. "Why," he added, his homely countenance lighting up with sudden intelligence until it became almost handsome, "they'll be sure to come back for us, won't they?"

In the depth of his contrition for what he now regarded

as his folly, and despair at being deserted by Captain Hanson, this thought had not come to Rae, but the moment Freckles voiced it its reasonableness appealed to him at once, and he grasped at it eagerly.

“To be sure they will,” he cried, “and that’s what Captain Hanson’s gone away for. He’ll hurry down to Fort Camosun and get a lot of men, and then hurry back here, and make these villains give us up. We’ve only to be patient and it’ll be all right.”

Rae’s heart lightened wonderfully at this view of their situation. Gifted as he was with the fortunate faculty of looking at the bright side of things, and forgetting so far as possible the dark side, he began to plan out how long it would take the *Plover* to reach Fort Camosun and get back to Skidegate Inlet, and, after much thinking, came to the conclusion that three weeks would be an ample allowance of time.

For three weeks, then, he and Freckles would be in the hands of the Haidas, and manifestly their best policy was to give as little trouble as possible, in order that their captors might treat them kindly, and not be moved to any further violence.

“We must try to be very good boys, Freckles,” said Rae, with as close an appearance to a smile as he was equal to in his heavy-hearted state. “They won’t be hard on us if we don’t give them any trouble. I suppose they’ll take everything we have,” he went on ruefully, “and that means I’ll lose my rifle and pistols, and other things. Oh dear ! oh dear ! oh dear ! but we have made a mess of it and no mistake.”

While the boys thus talked they were watched by a group of Haidas, of both sexes and all ages, who stared at them as though they were some strange kind of animals, and exchanged comments in their guttural speech. Some of the men would evidently have liked very well to make out what Rae and Freckles were saying to each other, they looked at them so intently; but the boys did not allow that to disconcert them at all, and no interference was attempted.

Indeed, now that the *Plover* had disappeared, and the dingey been broken into kindling wood — for this was done shortly after the boys' capture — the savages showed no desire to restrict the movements of their captives. They of course always kept a sharp eye on them, but when the two, more for the sake of something to do than for any other reason, set out for a stroll along the beach, no one hindered, and they were allowed to wander about as they pleased.

By-and-by they began to feel very hungry, and to wonder where they would get their next meal, and what it would be like. But nobody seemed to think of their wants, or to have anything in the way of food to offer them.

They were getting into a very disconsolate mood when a happy thought flashed into Rae's mind.

"Look here, Freckles," said he with brightening face, "let's go back to the house where they made us prisoners, and tell them they've got to give us something to eat. It's their business to look after us since they've kept us against our will."

“To be sure,” assented Freckles; “they must give us enough to eat anyway.”

So the pair of them trudged back, and entering the house as if they belonged there, by dint of very expressive pantomime soon made the women understand what they wanted.

But before the women dared do anything they had to get instructions from the chief, who was not then in the dwelling, and the hungry boys had to wait until he could be hunted up and his approval secured. At last, however, this was accomplished, and then they were served with the same fare as that which they had refused earlier in the day — namely, baked halibut and boiled salmon, with berries soaked in oulachan grease as a relish. No salt, no bread, no knives, no forks — nothing but bare fingers and keen appetites.

But they were very, very hungry, and the fish had a tempting savor, even if it was untemptingly served; so they fell to with great vigor, and paused not until all sense of emptiness amidships had disappeared, and they felt in much better humor.

The greasy berries they could do nothing with yet, though they looked so good that Rae determined to find out where they could be picked, so that he might eat them fresh, when he felt sure they must be delicious.

Their hunger satisfied, and nobody seeming to exercise any control over their movements, they went out again, after courteously thanking the women who had served them, and who evidently appreciated their smiles though they could not understand their words.

“And now that they’ve got us,” said Rae, “I’d like very much to know what they want to do with us. They’re not going to kill us, of course.”

“Oh no, they wouldn’t do that surely,” broke in Freckles, giving a shudder at the very mention of the word kill.

“Certainly not,” continued Rae, somewhat curtly, for he didn’t like to have Freckles showing so much feeling when he found it no easy task to control his own. “That would do them no good, and they want to make something out of us. I guess they are just going to hold us for a ransom, that’s what it is; and when father comes back in the *Plover*, as he’s sure to do, they’ll make him give ever so many things before they give us up, do you see?”

“That’s just it; you’re right,” responded Freckles, emphasizing each sentence with a confirmatory nod.

“Well, then, we’ve just got to wait, that’s all,” said Rae, “for we certainly can’t run away.” Then after a pause he added in a doleful tone, “Oh my! but won’t we get sick of that everlasting fish, and those horrid berries! They seem to have nothing else to eat here.”

Freckles made no reply to this. He had been used to pretty poor fare all his life, and so long as a sound skin was left him he had no disposition to be at odds with fate, provided sufficient food of some kind or other came his way each day.

From thoughts of fare the transition to thoughts of accommodation was very natural, and so Rae’s next remark, after an interval of thoughtful reflection, was, —

“Where do you think they’ll let us sleep, Freckles? There doesn’t seem to be any room in those houses. They’re just swarming like ant-heaps already; and I couldn’t bear the idea of sleeping there anyway, for you see the women and the girls sleep there as well as the men, more like animals than human beings. Ugh!” and he gave a most expressive grunt of disgust.

Freckles shook his head doubtfully. He liked a comfortable bed as well as any other boy, and he saw little prospect of having it in one of the dark and close-smelling Haida dwellings.

“Do you think they’d let us sleep outside, Rae?” he asked. “We might fix up a kind of lodge, just for ourselves, you know.”

Rae sprang to his feet, for they had been reclining on a bit of grass near the beach, with a beaming face, and giving his companion a hearty slap on the back, exclaimed, —

“Bully for you, Freckles! that’s a great notion. We must go and see about it at once, and if they make no objection we will have the thing put up to sleep in to-night.”

So off they went, this time straight to the chief’s house where Captain Hanson had been received; for Rae shrewdly argued that in a matter of this kind his word would be law, and if they got his consent they would have no further difficulty.

They found the strange-looking old man at home, and Rae began at once the task of getting him to understand what they wanted.

The scene which ensued was amusing enough to have entertained a larger and more critical gathering of spectators than had the privilege of being present. The old chief, whose name by the way was Hi-ling-a, signifying "thunder," seemed in a very gracious mood, and anxious to understand the desires of his white captives; but in spite of his goodwill and Rae's most ingenious pantomime, he could not apprehend the latter's meaning, so that the chance of the boys gaining their point seemed very faint, and they were about to give up in despair, Rae fearing lest they might irritate the chief by persisting, when there came forward a young woman, who but for the labret which disfigured her mouth would have been quite pretty, and who by the richness of her dress evidently belonged to the chief's family. She was, in fact, his favorite daughter, and bore the pleasing name of Kaitza (star). She had been a silent observer of the interview, and did not venture to take any part of the proceedings until her quick intelligence told her that the boys were not making themselves understood by the chief at all, whereas she thought she fully caught their meaning.

Gliding up to her father, she touched him on the arm and whispered something in his ear.

He looked up in a surprised questioning way, and seemed to doubt the accuracy of her suggestion; but she repeated it at more length, and Rae's face brightened as he saw signs of comprehension in the old man's countenance.

But if he understood, he was not at first disposed to

assent. He shook his head in a way that was not promising; and after a little more talk with his daughter, who was manifestly pleading the boys' case, a messenger was despatched to bring somebody in to him.

With growing uneasiness Rae waited further developments, although Kaitza made efforts to encourage him by bestowing furtive smiles upon him whenever she caught his eye. The truth of the matter was, the tawny belle had already conceived a warm liking for the handsome white boy, and was resolved to do whatever lay in her power to mitigate the inevitable miseries of his captivity.

In the course of half-an-hour the messenger returned, bringing with him the chief man of the house in which the boys had been captured, who came next in rank to Hi-ling-a, and counted upon succeeding him as chief of the village. He was called Sli-goo (the otter), and from the very first Rae had taken a strong dislike to him because of his cruel, cunning face.

He manifested some surprise at finding Rae in the chief's abode, and asked a question or two about it which old Hi-ling-a answered very curtly, as though to suggest that it was no particular business of his.

The chief explained Rae's request as it had been interpreted to him by Kaitza, in order that Sli-goo might give his opinion about it.

Sli-goo listened gravely, regarded the boys in silence for a few minutes, assumed his very sagest look, and then growled out something which Rae, from the dis-

appointed expression in Kaitza's face, rightly judged to be an unconditional negative.

But it's an ill wind that blows nobody good.

Although Hi-ling-a had sent for Sli-goo to consult with him in the matter partly because of his rank, and partly because he had been chiefly instrumental in the boys' capture, yet he had no love for the fellow; and taking it into his head that Sli-goo's judgment was influenced by the desire to have the boys entirely in his own hands, the old chief determined to disappoint him as to that, while agreeing with him to not allow them to put up a lodge for their own occupation.

He therefore told Sli-goo that he would keep the boys in his own dwelling, and take good care of them for the present, whereat Sli-goo waxed very cross, and went away looking as sulky as ever his animal-namesake could look; while Hi-ling-a smiled grimly at him, as though to say, —

“You'd like to have everything your own way, no doubt; but you won't so long as I'm chief of the village.”

He then called his daughter to him, and they talked together for a while; after which she came to Rae, and with true feminine tact and cleverness managed to make him understand that he and Freckles might have a corner of the house all to themselves, with which arrangement they had no other alternative but to be content.

Having done this, her next proceeding was to bring them each a pair of large new blankets, such as the Haidas obtained in barter from the Tsimshians, which

Rae greatly rejoiced to see, for they meant solid comfort at night, and he did not intend to be any more miserable than he could help during the period of his captivity.

One pair of the blankets he at once fixed up in such a way as to effectually screen their corner, seeing which the kind-hearted Kaitza, who seemed to be able to do pretty much as she pleased, brought him another pair for use as covering, smiling and nodding all the time with great vivacity, so that Rae's heart began to warm towards her, even though she were a savage, and he determined in his mind that when he got his freedom he would make her some handsome presents before going away.

Before nightfall he and Freckles gathered a large quantity of small cedar boughs that made a soft, springy, and most fragrant mattress, and with one pair of blankets to sleep on and another pair to cover them, they had as comfortable a couch as two hearty, healthy boys could wish.

But, in spite of it all, a terrible sense of loneliness fell upon Rae when, after they had turned in for the night and Freckles had fallen asleep, he was left to the company of his own thoughts. Kindly as their treatment had been since the first roughness attending their capture, he could not forget that they were in the midst of a savage people, capable of any cruelty they might feel moved to, and a people whose habits and modes of life were in many ways intolerantly repulsive.

To describe the poor boy's state of mind as merely home-sickness would be doing it faint justice. He was

both home-sick and heart-sick, and as he pictured Captain Hanson bringing the news to his father, and the poignant distress it would cause the factor, his burden of grief seemed more than he could bear.

“Oh, why did I ever come away in the *Plover*?” he sobbed. “Dear father didn’t want me to. He said he’d a feeling that something was going to happen to me. But I just was bound to have my own way, and now this is what’s come of it. If I was the only one that had to suffer it wouldn’t matter so much, for I’m sure I deserve it; but poor father doesn’t, and he’ll feel just as bad.”

In the course of the irregular, exciting kind of life Rae had been living of late, his good habit of praying at night and morning had been very much broken into; but now he turned to it with the conviction that he had no other resource, and lifted up his heart in silent yet earnest petition to God to help him to be brave and patient amid all the difficulties and dangers that surrounded him, and to deliver him from the hands of the Haidas as soon as possible.

Soon after he fell sound asleep, and dreamed that the *Plover* had come back with his father and Mr. Ogden and a number of other men, all heavily armed, and that they had marched right up to Hi-ling-a’s house and taken him and Freckles off without anybody daring to interfere.

This dream made him so happy that it was a keen reverse to be awakened in the morning by the shrill cries of the children at the back of the house, and to find himself, instead of safely back on board the schooner, still

surrounded by the squalor and strangeness of savage life.

Rousing Freckles, who slept as peacefully as a baby, he went out in search of a secluded spot for a bathe in the invigorating brine. The day was bright and warm, and the joy of the sunshine and the sea soon entered into his spirit, dispelling the gloom and helping him to see things in a more hopeful light.

As he looked out across the glassy surface of the inlet in the direction from which the schooner would come, he said to his companion, —

“ Ah, Freckles, wouldn’t it make your heart glad to see the *Plover’s* white sails coming round that point ? ”

“ That it would, ” responded Freckles. “ But there’s no such chance for a month at any rate. Do you think these people will be good to us right along ? ” he added, with some degree of trepidation in his tone.

Rae laughed carelessly. This thought did not give him much concern. He had quite made up his mind as to the object of the Haidas making them captive. They were after a ransom, that was all, and they’d treat them well enough so long as they did not attempt to escape, of doing which he had not the slightest intention, preferring to wait quietly until the rescue upon which he so confidently counted should come.

Had he fully understood the savages’ purpose concerning himself and Freckles his mind might not have been quite so easy. He was correct as regards the ransom idea, it is true, but that was not all they had in view.

There was a further reason for their conduct which he did not suspect, but which ere long would be made plain, and which had he known would have caused him much concern. But this revelation would come soon enough, and in the meantime he had quite enough to worry him.

As soon as they had finished their bathe the boys went back to the chief's house, feeling more refreshed and with appetites as keen as razors. Here Kaitza met them, smiling expansively, and hastened to put before them platters filled with smoking fish, to which they lost no time in paying due attention.

"And now," said Rae, when they had finished breakfast, "I wonder what they intend to do with us? It would be some satisfaction to know."

Freckles nodded affirmatively.

"They must have some plan in their heads," he said, looking very wise; "but what I can't make out is, how they're going to explain it to us, seeing that we don't know a word of one another's language."

"Oh, I guess that girl will make us understand," responded Rae: "see how she fixed everything for us last night. She's a real bright girl, I tell you, and wouldn't be bad looking if it weren't for those things on her nose and lip. It's a pity that she don't know better than to make such a fright of herself. I'd like to tell her to take them out."

While they were talking the old chief appeared, attended by a couple of lads bearing the boys' rifles, which

had been brought up from the other house. They were delighted to see them again, as they feared they were lost to them forever.

Handing each one his own rifle, Hi-ling-a signified by a gesture that they should follow him, and set off toward the other end of the village, striding along at a pace that the boys found it difficult to keep up with, and seemed curiously at variance with the chief's apparent age.

But if he was old and ugly, he was also tough and wiry; and as Rae followed in his wake, he began to feel considerably more respect for him than previously. He had taken him to be little better than a mummy, and was now being effectually undeceived.

When they had passed all the houses, Hi-ling-a bid the boys stand still, while he went ahead about a hundred yards and hung his decorated head-dress upon the side of a blasted tree that stood out prominently.

Returning, he motioned to Rae to take aim at the mark he had thus set. The boy naturally shrank from doing so, and tried to make the old man understand that some other mark would serve equally well, but he could not change his mind; and, noting that he was beginning to be provoked, he said,—

“Oh, very well—have it your own way; but if I spoil your fine hat, it's your own look-out.”

Loading his gun carefully, he aimed with great deliberation; for by this time half the inhabitants of the village had gathered, and he realized that his skill as a marksman was on that trial, and that success was all-important.

When the report rang out the children screamed, the women started and looked very much scared, and the men's faces filled with wonder. The Haidas were not yet generally familiar with firearms, and had none in their own possession.

As the smoke blew away old Hi-ling-a hastened over to the tree and removed his head-dress, examining it eagerly. At once his grizzled countenance lit up with exultation in a way that seemed a little puzzling, in view of the fact that a big hole was bored through and through the head-gear and some of its ornaments shattered and spoiled.

Hurrying back to Rae, he pointed this out, smiling and nodding his head, and giving vent to some guttural sounds which the successful marksman rightly interpreted to mean,—

“Good, good! well done! capital shot!”

Being quite satisfied as to Rae's skill, and not wishing to expose his head-gear to further damage, Hi-ling-a pointed to a tree-trunk that made a good target about fifty yards away, and bid Freckles try his aim at that.

Freckles obeyed dutifully, and by great good luck, for he had had little opportunity to become expert in shooting, and was a poor shot, he managed to plant a bullet fairly in the centre, making the rotten wood send out a shower of dust that showed everybody he had not missed.

Again the old chief smiled and nodded and grunted. Evidently he derived a peculiar satisfaction from the boys being able to use their rifles so well, and had some pur-

pose in view concerning them which was of no small importance.

After the shooting was over he summoned to him the leading men of the village, with whom he engaged in earnest consultation, the boys once more being left to do as they pleased.

In one way or another they managed to wile away the time, and when at mid-day they returned to the chief's house, Rae could not fail to notice that they were the objects of more consideration than they had hitherto been. Kaitza was very pronounced in her attention, and Rae thought he detected in her look a certain impression of sadness which puzzled him considerably. She had evidently something on her mind which gave her keen concern. Rae would have liked very much to know what it was, but he could not ask, and she could not perhaps have made it clear to him if he had asked.

Their dinner was much improved by the substitution of broiled trout for the halibut, and the addition of a few potatoes baked in the ashes. The Haidas raised a small quantity of these, having been given the seed by the traders some years before. They called them "skow-skit," and although, owing to poor cultivation, they were not much bigger than crab-apples, the white boys hailed their appearance with lively satisfaction, and ate of them heartily.

Another welcome addition to their fare was the sal-lal berry, which they found much to their taste, so that they got on very well indeed at this meal, and it made them more hopeful for the future.

That afternoon there was a gathering of the chief men at Hi-ling-a's house, and what was evidently a most important consultation held, as the result of which two runners were despatched northward on a momentous mission.

CHAPTER XIII.

SAVAGE LIFE.

AS time hung heavy upon their hands, Rae determined to employ it by entering so far as possible into the life and occupations of the people around him, and so the next morning, when the canoes were starting off to the halibut grounds, without saying "by your leave," he and Freckles jumped into the largest, and sat down in a way that said plainly, —

"We're going with you if you've got no objections."

The Indians seemed surprised at the action, and did not push off until one of them had run up to Hi-ling-a's house and asked his approval, which was promptly granted, however, and their minds being thus set at rest they accepted the unasked addition to their crew with their usual stolidity.

A dozen expert paddlers kneeled in the bottom, and sent their swift craft skimming through the smooth water with sinewy strokes. Sitting comfortably in the stern, the boys felt like princes, and Rae took upon himself to encourage the paddlers by calling out, —

"That's the way. Give it to her. Now you're doing

it," and so forth, just as if they were training for a race, and he was their coach.

Freckles, although a little appalled at his companion's presumption, found it very amusing nevertheless, and it kept him on the broad grin, to all of which the savages took no offence, but seemed to consider it right enough.

The fishing grounds were not far from the Skidegate Inlet, and the Indians knew well the localities where the halibut most abounded. Having reached the spot, they moored the canoe by means of a big stone secured to a cedar bark rope, and proceeded to get out their fishing tackle.

When Rae saw their hooks, he could with difficulty restrain his laughter. They had two kinds in use, both seeming absurdly large and clumsy to the boy, who was accustomed to the best English manufacture. One kind was of wood with a bone barb, being made from a forked branch, or with two pieces of tough wood lashed together so as to make an acute angle, the bone barb being fastened to the lower piece so as to project backward, and insure a good hold. The other kind of hook was fashioned out of a thin iron rod bent round and sharpened to a point. For lines they had strong cord, obtained in barter from the Tsimshians. The bait used consisted of small fish caught inshore for the purpose.

Having never before taken part in halibut fishing, Rae watched all the preliminaries with lively interest, and wished very much that he had a hook and line of his own

that he might try his luck. But none of the natives offered to loan him theirs, so he was fain to be an idle spectator while they hauled in one fine big fellow after another, and he found this too stupid to be endured for long.

Feeling about in his pockets he found a copper coin, and this gave him an idea. The Haida nearest him was a rather pleasant-looking young fellow, whose luck was outdone by no one in the canoe. After he had caught several big fish Rae thought it a good time to try him, and holding the coin in one hand he took up the line with the other, signifying that he wished to exchange.

The Indian looked doubtful for a moment, but the attraction of the coin prevailed, and he handed over his line, saying something which were no doubt directions for its proper use, but which went for nothing so far as Rae was concerned.

With the fisherman's instinct at its height, Rae let out his line, and waited eagerly for a bite. He was not kept long in suspense. A strong tug at the hook told him that the bait was taken, and with a quick jerk he made sure that the barb went duly home. But when he tried to pull up his prize he found he had a very difficult task on his hands from the others. With them the landing of their fish had been an easy job, and he was greatly surprised at the resistance his manifested.

"Come here, Freckles," said he, getting red in the face from his exertion, "and lend me a hand. I've hooked a huge one, I believe."

Freckles took hold of the line, which was a very stout one, and the two boys pulled upon it lustily, their united strength being not without result, as the fish slowly yielded to it, and presently became visible from the canoe.

By this time the Indians had become interested in Rae's capture, and were all watching for its appearance. When it did come into view a broad grin went from face to face, while a look of intense disgust came over the young fisherman's countenance, for his prize was not a monster halibut as he had fondly hoped, but another of the flounder species — to wit, a hugh wolf-fish, as useless as it was hideous.

Rae felt so incensed at being thus imposed upon that, grasping one of the paddles, he hit the ugly creature a savage blow on the nose to stun it, and then drawing its head alongside tore out the hook, and with another whack of the paddle sent it scooting back to deep water, no doubt a sadder and a wiser fish. He made no further attempt at fishing that morning, but vowed that some day soon he and Freckles would go off by themselves, and see if they could not do better.

When the canoe returned to the village they found the inhabitants full of bustle and excitement. Some important preparations were evidently in progress, but what they were or with what object Rae could not make out, curious as he was to ascertain. No one took any notice of Freckles or himself. Even Kaitza seemed to be engrossed with other things. So the boys had nothing to do save to look on, and speculate as to what all the fuss was about.

“I believe there’s fighting in the wind,” said Rae, after watching the Haidas for a while. “They’re getting their bows and arrows ready, and seeing after their spears. I wonder if they’re going to make a raid on some other village. Those savages are always up to some mischief of that kind. It seems as if they couldn’t be content to let one another alone.”

That night the whole population of the village assembled in the open space before the chief’s house, and the boys, realizing that an event of no ordinary importance was to take place, began to feel apprehensive as to how it would concern them. They had been well enough treated so far, and had certainly taken care not to give anybody any offence; but none the less they were captives among a savage people who might have very strange and bloodthirsty rites in connection with their religion, and as a religious ceremony of some sort was evidently about to be engaged in, who knew but what they might be offered up in sacrifice to the Haidas’ gods?

All this passed through Rae’s mind, but he strove to keep a firm hand upon himself, and said encouragingly to Freckles, —

“There’s no telling what they’ll be up to, Freckles, once they get going. Father’s told me some dreadful stories of what the Indians do in their dances, but we mustn’t let on we’re afraid of anything, so don’t let them see you looking scared whatever happens, eh!”

Freckles promised to do his best, and keeping close together, the boys waited in much anxiety for what might

come to pass. Once or twice Rae caught Kaitza looking at him in the sorrowful way he had noticed before, and he longed intensely to be able to ask her if she thought any harm was coming to them. But of course there was no doing that, so he had to content himself with hoping that all would go well.

When the people had gathered in a great circle, leaving an open space in the middle lighted by two blazing fires of pine knots, a strange silence fell upon them as though they were engaged in silent prayer. They were awaiting the appearance of Hi-ling-a and of the medicine-man, who should be leaders of the exercises.

Presently there emerged from the chief's house the tall form of the old man, looking most imposing in his extraordinary costume. Upon his head was a sort of crown made of the stout bristles from the whiskers of the sea-lion, set upright in a circle, while between them feather-down was heaped, which at each step he took was scattered on all sides, falling softly like snow among the awe-struck spectators. Around his shoulders he wore a very large Tsimshian blanket, made of fine cedar bark and the wool of the mountain-goat.

His legs were covered with leggings, from which stuck out innumerable puffin beaks, and then his face was painted in brilliant streaks of red and yellow that made him almost unrecognizable.

Moving with great deliberation and dignity he made his way to the point in the circle midway between the two fires, and seated himself upon a broad tree-stump,

while a murmur, that probably meant applause, went round the congregation.

Glancing about till his eyes fell upon Rae and Freckles, he solemnly beckoned them to him, and placed them beside him on either hand. They were sorry to be thus separated, yet they both had a feeling of relief at thus being taken under the old chief's wing. He had been their best friend so far, and would no doubt take care of them now.

A low murmuring noise now began to be heard, which gradually grew in strength until it filled all the air, at which point there suddenly dashed into the circle a figure even more startling in appearance than the chieftain.

It was that of a man above the usual height, the body being naked except for a breech-clout, but painted with brilliant colors; while instead of a human head was that of a horrible monster resembling a fabled dragon, with great gleaming eyes, and cavernous mouth filled with cruel teeth, the top of the head bristling with thick coarse hair, and the whole effect in the flashing firelight being little short of appalling.

On the entrance of this monster into the circle the drumming grew fast and furious, and there was added to it an almost ear-splitting chorus of rattles, which were suddenly produced by the men and frantically shaken, the women contributing their share to the noise by breaking into a wild wailing chant that had something strangely pathetic in its long drawn-out modulations.

Involuntarily Freckles stretched out his hand behind



"The whole effect being little short of appalling."

the chief's back to Rae for comfort, and then hand in hand the boys watched with eyes full of wonder and apprehension the savage ceremony.

Having looked about him in a quick fierce way for a few moments, the central figure now began to dance, at first in the usual slouching fashion common among Indians, bending his knees, but not lifting his feet far from the ground. This he kept up without change for full half-an-hour, the weird chorus of drums, rattles, and voices going on steadily. Then he began to stamp violently on the ground, and to give vent to deep grunts, in response to which the music grew faster, and the voices became more piercing, and thus the dancing and noise gathered speed and volume until the man in the centre of the circle worked himself up into a kind of frenzy that was repulsive to witness.

Throwing aside his mask, he allowed his face to be seen. It was covered with paint and perspiration. His eyes rolled like a madman's, and foam gathered at the corners of his mouth. Ranging up and down between the two fires that now were blazing their brightest, he glanced this way and that as though seeking for some object upon which to vent his fury.

Rae shuddered and shrank behind the chief. He did not know at what moment the frenzied dancer might single him out for some horrible part in the ceremony.

Presently the dancer paused, glared wildly about him, and then began to creep down towards where the boys were in the manner of one stalking a deer. There was

something so unearthly and appalling in his whole appearance that Rae was rooted to the spot with terror.

Nearer and nearer with sly stealthy steps drew the dancer, until he halted as though for a spring just in front of Rae. The poor boy, chilled and faint with fright, cowered at the feet of Hi-ling-a, who sat as motionless as though carved in stone. Freckles had sunk out of sight behind the chief. There was a moment of thrilling silence, for the drummers and rattlers and singers had all suddenly ceased their noise. Then came a hideous cry, more like the howl of a wolf than any sound from a human throat, and with a tremendous bound the dancer threw himself—not upon Rae, who had involuntarily shut his eyes in sheer horror—but upon a dog that, all unmindful of the uproar, had been curled up quietly at the feet of Hi-ling-a.

Seizing the struggling creature with both hands, so that it was powerless to bite, the dancer buried his teeth in its haunch, and tore out a gory mouthful, which he hastened to munch with great apparent relish. Then hurling the animal, howling with pain, beyond the circle of enthralled spectators, he followed it himself, disappearing in the darkness amid a curious but significant murmur of relief from the circle, whose feelings had been much wrought upon during the ceremony.

As for Rae, it seemed as if he were waking from some awful nightmare. He had been simply paralyzed with terror, and the whole performance seemed so abominable that he fain would have run away into the dark-

ness only that he did not dare to leave the chief, whom he had come to look upon as his guardian.

Although the dancer had vanished the circle remained unbroken, and evidently awaited further proceedings.

"Oh, I hope there's not going to be any more of it," whispered Rae behind the chief's back to Freckles, who was looking so pale that the tan spots on his face stood out like blotches of color. "That was awful, wasn't it? and the next thing may be worse."

Happily, however, his fears were not fulfilled. The next thing was not worse, nor half so bad. After an interval of silent expectation, during which performers had a chance to give their lungs and muscles a needed rest, the music began again, slow and subdued, and soon another figure entered the ring.

This was the ska-ga or medicine-man of the tribe, and the deity having been duly propitiated by the preceding rite, he was now to give the people the prophetic message which they were eagerly awaiting.

The ska-ga was a tall man, woefully emaciated from protracted fasting, with hair hanging over his shoulders in tangled locks, and a garb that was tattered and frayed until it seemed hardly able to hold together. In one hand he held a large rattle richly carved, in the other a hollow bone also carved and inlaid with pieces of haliotis shell.

Shaking the rattle gently he walked with slow, hesitating steps three times around the circle, keeping his eyes bent upon the ground as though he were in pro-

found thought. At the third time he halted before the chief, and after regarding him so intently for a few minutes that the old man was fain to drop his eyes in some confusion, the ska-ga began to chant in a strange monotonous fashion, running the words one into the other, so that even the chief could hardly make them out, while the others, eagerly though they listened, evidently could not understand him at all.

The chant continued several minutes, Hi-ling-a's wrinkled countenance at times breaking into a smile as the medicine-man spoke something that was much to his mind.

When the ska-ga ceased he too vanished into the darkness as the dancer had done, and then the chief, for the first time rising from his seat of honor, began an address to his people. He spoke in a low yet distinct voice at the start, and they all crowded close so as to hear every word, but as he proceeded his expression and tone became more impassioned. The words poured like a torrent from his lips, his eyes flashed fire, and his gestures were fierce and warlike. The Indians responded with vigorous grunts of approval, and with faces whose wild looks reflected his own.

Finally, when he reached the climax of his oration, he took hold of Rae and Freckles with either hand, placed them in front of him, and shouted something, upon which the whole gathering broke into a furious chorus of whoops and yells that made the boys' blood run cold. "God help us!" murmured Rae; "they're going to do for us now."

And it certainly seemed as if he were right this time, for the excited savages surrounded them looking as though they wanted to tear them in pieces.

Yet through all this commotion Hi-ling-a, the passion attending his speech having spent itself, continued calm and silent, while the pleased expression of his face showed that he cordially approved of the rumpus his people were creating.

If Rae could only have understood the true nature of the whole proceeding, instead of being terrified he might have felt highly flattered, for this was what had actually taken place.

The Haidas of Skidegate Inlet were in a chronic state of war with the tribe whose settlement was at Masset Inlet to the north; and just before the arrival of the *Plover* they had been planning and preparing for an attack upon their enemies.

Seeing how few of the white men there were, the brilliant idea had entered old Hi-ling-a's active brain of capturing the schooner and crew, and compelling the latter to join their war party, and give them the aid of their firearms, which would insure complete victory.

The attempt on the schooner having failed, he had to be content with the two boys, who had innocently placed themselves in his hands, and the whole object of the ceremony which had been so trying to them was to secure the approval of the deities of the projected expedition.

The ska-ga had signified this in a manner more than

usually distinct for so oracular and distinguished a personage, and all the fierce yelling and whooping was nothing more or less than the delight of the Indians at having two such champions added to their army.

As for Kaitza and her sorrowful, sympathetic looks which had intensified Rae's concern for himself and Freckles, they were simply due to her fear of the dangers to which the white boys must be exposed in thus going to war for her tribe. She had fallen violently in love with Rae, and the thought of his going away up to Masset, and fighting with the fierce and warlike Indians, gave her keen concern.

It was not until some time afterwards that Rae understood all this, but in the meantime when the excitement had subsided, and the people set themselves to feasting without manifesting any desire to eat him or do him any other harm, his mind grew easier, and not having any stomach for the feast he slipped away with Freckles to the chief's house, where all was quiet, and they were able to get to sleep, being thoroughly wearied by the events of the day.

The village slept late the next morning, and the boys had been up and taken their daily swim before any of the Indians had made their appearance.

As Rae looked at the long line of canoes drawn up on the beach, and carefully covered with thick mats to prevent the sun from warping and splitting their cedar sides, he said to Freckles, —

“Oh, if we could only just take one of those canoes

and paddle down to Fort Camosun. But we couldn't, of course; and it's no use thinking about it. We've got to wait here until the *Plover* comes back for us."

"But suppose, Rae, the *Plover* doesn't come back," asked Freckles — "what will we do then?"

"The *Plover* not come back!" exclaimed Rae indignantly. "What makes you say that? Do you think Captain Hanson would be so mean as to desert us altogether?"

"Oh, no," protested Freckles earnestly. "That isn't what I mean. But I was thinking if the *Plover* should be wrecked on her way down. You know we had some narrow escapes coming up; and if anything like that should happen to her, and she never got to Fort Camosun, wouldn't we have to stay here for the rest of our lives?" and the mere thought of so lamentable a contingency made the boy's eyes grow moist and his lip quiver.

Now it was one of the sources of strength as well as weakness in Rae's nature that he was prone to take the brightest side and most hopeful view of the future. He was, in fact, a consistent optimist; and while this had, at times, the advantage of rendering him over-sanguine of success, and therefore inclined to be rash in attempting things, as we have already seen, still it also helped him to keep up a brave heart in the face of adversity.

The idea of the *Plover* failing to return had never entered his mind, and when Freckles suggested it he was angered.

"Look here, Freckles," he cried, with his face flushed,

and his fists clenched as though he would strike him for his ill-timed croaking, "I just wish you wouldn't talk that way. We've got enough to worry us without imagining things that may never happen. I feel sure the *Plover's* coming back for us; and even if she doesn't we'll find some way of getting back to the fort. We're not going to stay here always, you may depend upon that."

Freckles hung his head and looked very penitent.

"All right, Rae; I won't say anything more about it," he said humbly. "But it just came into my mind, you know."

All that day the village was filled with bustle and preparation.

The expedition was to go in canoes, and these were being painted and fixed up in the most elaborate manner of which their owners were capable. The women were busy preparing a supply of food, so that the warriors would not have to depend upon what they could secure *en route*; and even the children had caught the infection of war, and were having mimic combats, in which some of them, however, got such hard knocks that their wails pierced the air.

Hi-ling-a sent for the boys, and gave them to understand that he wanted to know how many times their rifles could be fired. Rae carefully examined the contents of their powder-flasks and bullet-pouches, and found that they had each sufficient for about twenty-five charges, while their cap-boxes were practically full.

On the old chief being informed of this he looked highly pleased. Evidently he counted that in his white captives he held the trump-card in the game of war he prepared to play with the Masset Indians. They had no firearms, he knew, and were not accustomed to them, so that their effect might well be to produce a panic that would place victory in the hands of the Skidegate tribe.

There was more dancing and feasting that night, but Rae and Freckles kept aloof. Hi-ling-a did not require their presence, and although by this time all fear of personal harm had vanished the whole ceremony was so distasteful that they wanted no more of it.

Another who remained away from the gathering around the fires was Kaitza, and she hung about Rae in a way that was really pathetic, and that he could not fail to notice. It bothered him not a little, for it seemed as if she must be wanting something; but as she could not put her wish into words he did not know how to meet it.

“What can that girl be after, Freckles?” Rae asked somewhat fretfully of his companion. “She seems to have something on her mind, and to be wanting to tell us, but how can she when we don’t know a word of one another’s language?”

“Perhaps she doesn’t want us to go with the others wherever they’re going,” suggested Freckles. “She’d like us to stay here and keep her company maybe.”

“Tut!” snorted Rae contemptuously; “if that’s her notion she’s upon the wrong tack. Catch me staying

with her and the women and children. I'm going with the men, that's sure."

Poor Kaitza, who seemed to have some suspicion that she was the subject of their talk, looked as if she would give her very eyes to understand its drift, and then slipping away softly reappeared with a basketful of delicious berries she had herself picked that day, and offering them to the boys her tawny face lighted up with pleasure as she saw how heartily her gift was appreciated.

Rae thanked her warmly, and if she could not interpret his words she had no difficulty in reading the expression of his face; and this evidently satisfied her, for a very contented, happy look came into hers, and she went back to her part of the house with a light step, leaving the boys to settle down for the night.

The following morning the warlike expedition set forth. It was a most propitious day, bright, cool, and free from wind. One hundred and fifty braves formed the party, Hi-ling-a being in command, and having Rae and Freckles as his personal attendants.

It required ten of the largest canoes to carry them, as they took along a bountiful supply of dried fish, berries, potatoes, and oulachan grease, lest they might not be able to obtain sufficient provision on the way.

These canoes were admirable in their way, being made from single trees of the red cedar, which is light, durable, and easily worked. Their lines were very fine, the requisite amount of beam being obtained by steaming the hollow log with water and hot stones, and inserting

thwarts, while the bow and stern were provided with strong spurs sloping upward, and scarfed to the main body of the canoe.

They were very sea-worthy craft, but had one serious weakness which needed to be guarded against: the wood was apt to split parallel with the grain; and when heavily laden in rough weather the strain would sometimes prove too much, causing a bad leak, and placing the occupants in imminent danger.

The chief's canoe was full forty feet long, and contained twenty men besides Hi-ling-a and the boys, and a large quantity of stuff. All paddled save the chief and Rae and Freckles, and the two latter found it very pleasant to stretch out comfortably in the stern upon a pile of blankets and be paddled along at the rate of six miles an hour by the powerful Indians, from whose vocabulary the word weariness seemed to have been banished, as hour after hour passed and their mighty strokes never slackened for a moment.

The route lay along the eastern side of the island, which was one continuous line of surf-beaten rock, so that the canoes had to keep well out from land; but the Indians did not mind that, being accustomed to make trips across Hecate Strait to the mainland in order to trade with the Tsimshians and other tribes.

Beyond the birds in the air or the fish in the sea there was absolutely no sign of living creature.

"What a dreary, desolate country," said Rae to Freckles, pointing to the coast by which they were pass-

ing. "Just imagine having to live in such a place as that. Why, I believe I'd go crazy in a month."

"So would I," assented Freckles. "I don't like living in the woods anyway. I'm sick of them. I wish I could live in a place where there was a whole lot of people, and no Indians or wild animals. That's what I'd like."

"I would too," replied Rae, "for a while anyway. I want to see something of the rest of the world. I'm getting tired of this part of it. I wonder will I ever get to Europe, or Asia, or any of those places."

"You will, of course, Rae," said Freckles very positively, "but I'm not likely to, unless," and he glanced shyly at his companion as though to see how he would like the suggestion, "you take me, for nobody else is going to do it."

Rae brought down his hand with a hearty slap on Freckles's knee, and his face lit up with resolution.

"I will do it, Freckles," he exclaimed. "Just as sure as I go myself, I'll take you along. There now, I promise you."

It seemed a vain pledge to give, situated as they then were, captives in a Haida canoe bound upon a tribal foray, and certain to encounter many dangers on both sea and land while in the service of their captors, with no certain prospect of deliverance from them at any time.

But Freckles seemed to have perfect confidence in both Rae himself and in his future, and to believe that no matter how unpromising the present might be, there was a good time coming.

About mid-day the canoes made a stop at an inlet a little south of Cape Ball, where a river ran down to the sea, and there was a safe landing-place.

Here fires were lighted and dinner cooked, after which a rest of a couple of hours was announced by the chief; and seeing the Indians stretch themselves out for a sleep, Rae with his wonted enterprise determined upon a stroll, knowing well that the party would not set off again without him.

Accompanied by Freckles he went inland along the river-side, wondering if there was anything worth shooting in this part of the island. He had no desire to try conclusions again with a panther, but if something smaller and less pugnacious turned up, he was in the humor for a venture.

The stream turned and twisted so that the boys were soon out of sight of the sea, but they knew they could not lose themselves so long as they kept in sight of the river. Chatting carelessly they pushed on until they were about a quarter of a mile from the landing-place, and then Rae, feeling the sun very hot, threw himself down in the shade to cool off. Freckles followed his example.

They had not been there many minutes before there was a rustling in the bushes just beyond them, and as they gazed intently at the spot from whence the sound came, there emerged into the open a large black bear, tossing his head and sniffing the air in an inquiring way.

CHAPTER XIV.

WITH THE WAR-PARTY.

BEARS were not plentiful in the Queen Charlotte Islands at that time, but they were to be found in certain districts, and as it happened the Haidas had landed at one of the places, and there was nothing therefore extraordinary about the boys lighting upon one.

Of course the wisest thing under the circumstances would have been for them to keep perfectly still until Bruin had drunk his fill of water and taken himself off again. So long as they left him alone he certainly would not molest them. Bears are too fond of peace to make an unprovoked attack on anybody.

But the sight of the bear stirred Rae's spirit. What a splendid opportunity now presented itself to distinguish himself before the Indians! To make a conquest of the bear would insure the respect of his captors, and perhaps in some way help towards the regaining of his freedom.

Freckles had no such ambitious thoughts aroused. With him on all occasions of the kind discretion was the

better part of valor. He was a firm believer in the couplet which teaches that

“He who fights and runs away
May live to fight another day,”

with the modification that he greatly preferred running away without fighting at all.

Now he plucked Rae's sleeve vigorously, and whispered in a pleading anxious tone, —

“Let's run, Rae, he hasn't seen us yet; come.”

But instead of preparing to run, Rae carefully drew up his rifle so that the movement made no noise, and levelled it at the bear, who now presented his full front to them.

“Oh don't, Rae, please don't!” implored Freckles, and he put out his hand as though he would take hold of the rifle.

But Rae, without speaking, gave him a look that caused him to shrink back abashed. Mortally afraid of the bear as he felt, he was still more afraid of offending Rae, whose favor was the sunshine of his life.

Taking aim with the utmost deliberation, for he wanted to make sure work with the first shot, Rae pulled the trigger. The report rang out sharp and clear, and at the same instant the bear rolled over at the edge of the stream, writhing in mortal agony.

“Hurrah!” shouted Rae, springing to his feet and waving his hat triumphantly, “I've done for him. He'll be dead in a minute.”

In this case, however, he counted upon too quick

and easy a victory. Just as he showed himself the bear recovered from the first shock of the wound, and, catching sight of the two boys, at once attributed to them his sudden suffering.

With a dull roar he rushed across the stream and charged straight upon them before Rae had a chance to reload.

“Now then, Freckles, run for it,” cried Rae, setting his companion a good example, and away they went down the bank of the stream, the bear in close pursuit, although the great gouts of blood which marked his path showed how sorely he had been wounded.

Rae ran like a deer; but Freckles made poor speed, slipping and stumbling awkwardly so that he was soon in the rear, and had to gasp out an appeal to Rae not to leave him behind. He had hardly spoken, and Rae had just turned to wait for him, when his foot caught in a tree-root, and down he went, pitching his rifle ahead of him in his fall.

The bear was only a few yards from him as Rae shouted, —

“Pretend you’re dead, Freckles. Don’t move a muscle.”

Freckles heard and obeyed. When Bruin reached him he lay as still as a corpse, and the animal halted for a moment to smell him over.

This gave Rae an opportunity to which he gallantly responded. Freckles’s rifle, still undischarged, lay upon the ground a couple of yards from where the bear stood

over the prostrate boy. Darting forward he picked it up, and as the bear, noting his action, lifted his head with a fierce growl, he placed the muzzle at his head, almost touching his ear, and fired before Bruin could move.

The bullet went clear through the creature's brain, and without a sound he collapsed upon Freckles, his great weight fairly flattening the poor fellow against the hard ground, and squeezing every atom of breath out of him.

But Rae promptly relieved him of the oppressive burden and stood him on his feet, laughing joyously as he gazed about him in a dazed, bewildered fashion as though he did not know just what had happened to him.

Now in falling upon him the bear had rather liberally bespattered him with his own blood, and this at once caught Freckles's attention.

"O Rae! I'm wounded, I'm wounded," he cried in a piteous tone; "see how I'm bleeding," and he put his hands up to his face, which certainly had a horrifying appearance, all gory as it was.

"Nonsense!" laughed Rae, instantly surmising the true source of the blood; "you're not hurt a bit. That's the bear's blood on you."

"Are you sure?" asked Freckles eagerly. "Am I all right?"

"Of course you're all right," replied Rae. "Run down to the water and wash the blood off yourself. There's nothing else the matter with you."

With lightened heart Freckles did as he was bid, and came back looking quite himself again.

“Isn’t he a monster, Freckles?” said Rae, putting his foot proudly on the bear’s head. “Those Haidas will think a good deal more of us when they see what we’ve done, and I guess father would be proud if he knew it too. See, there are some of the Indians coming along now.”

It was old Hi-ling-a and half-a-dozen of his followers. The chief had heard the report of the rifle, and had at once set out to learn what it meant. When he saw the bear lying prostrate and lifeless he made no attempt to conceal his astonishment. The killing of such a creature was worthy the combined effort of a dozen of his most daring “braves,” but here it had been performed by a couple of boys, and with little apparent difficulty.

His followers evidently shared his feelings, and even though they could not voice them to him, Rae realized clearly enough that he had gone up greatly in their estimation, and would command their respect for the future.

At the command of the chief they set to work to skin and cut up the bear, a goodly portion of the body being brought back to the landing-place, where a feast was at once instituted, bear steak being regarded as a dainty of the first order by the Indians.

Rae felt in duty bound to eat some of it himself, but did not like it particularly, very much preferring a good steak of salmon or halibut.

Freckles was fervently grateful for Rae’s timely deliverance of him from the bear’s maw. He had quite given himself as beyond hope when he fell right in the infuriated

animal's way, and his escape seemed to him something in the shape of a miracle. As a result of his escape his devotion to Rae intensified, if that were possible; and although he had not the faculty of expressing himself in words, it might be read easily enough in his looks, so that even the savages were impressed by it.

Another consequence of the slaying of the bear was that instead of continuing their voyage that afternoon the war-party remained over night, being unwilling to proceed so long as a morsel of the bear remained unconsumed.

The next day broke dark and lowering. The sky was ashen gray, and the sea looked like molten lead. Rae was weather-wise enough already to see that a storm of no ordinary severity threatened, and he hoped that the Haidas would recognize it too, and decide upon a still further delay.

But, although they scanned the clouds and the horizon with serious countenances, and consulted earnestly for a time, the decision was to press forward, so, after a hastily prepared breakfast, they all embarked in the canoes again, and pushed on to the north.

Feeling sure that before long the spray would be dashing over the sides, for the sea was rising fast, Rae rolled up the rifles and ammunition very carefully in a thick blanket, and put them where they would be least exposed.

As the canoes pressed forward the wind steadily increased in strength. It was blowing from the north-east,

and although they would not feel its full force until they rounded Rose Point at the upper end of the island, still it soon severely taxed the utmost efforts of the sinewy paddlers to keep the canoes straight in their course, and to make any progress worthy of the name.

Rae's apprehensions of danger grew keener with the waxing of the wind. Admirably adapted for their purpose as the canoes were, still they were only canoes after all, and if the gale continued to increase at its present rate they must ere long prove unable to weather it.

But there was no sign of turning towards shore. Indeed as Rae looked anxiously in that direction, and saw everywhere as far as the eye could reach an interminable line of furious foaming breakers hurling their white crowns against an unbroken wall of mighty boulders, he realized clearly enough that to attempt a landing there would mean certain destruction, and that the only alternative was to keep on in hope of finding some inlet which might prove a harbor of refuge.

"We're in great danger, Freckles," said Rae, taking hold of his companion's hand for comfort, "and unless the storm stops soon there's not much chance for us. Why couldn't the Indians," he added in a tone of petulant protest, "have had the sense to see that it was going to be like this, and have stayed on shore until it got fine again? I'm sure I could have told them just what was coming."

"Perhaps they were afraid to stay there in case of the other Indians finding them out," suggested Freckles.

“They seemed to be talking very hard about something, and that may be the reason.”

“Humph,” growled Rae. “They weren’t sure of being found out, but they were sure of the storm coming on, and it would have been a good deal better to have taken their chances and stay ashore, than to come out here and all be drowned.”

Certainly as the morning drew on Rae’s view of the situation seemed fully justified. In spite of the strenuous efforts of the paddlers the headway made was hardly perceptible, and the point for which they were aiming, and on the other side of which they hoped to find a safe landing-place, seemed to get no nearer.

Presently the waves began to break over the sides of the canoes, drenching all on board, and adding discomfort to danger; and not only so, but another peril, and a still more serious peril, manifested itself. The amount of water that came over the gunwale was inconsiderable and could easily be got rid of by the bailers with which each canoe was supplied. But the leaking due to the straining of the wood whereby it opened along the grain as the canoes pitched and tossed in the heavy sea was another matter.

There was not one of the canoes that did not begin to show the effects of the strain upon it, the chief’s canoe being the best in this particular, yet by no means free from weakness, and Rae noted with lively alarm that the water was coming in faster than it went out, so seizing a bailer he cried to Freckles as he thrust another into his hand,

“Here, let us bail for all we know how. The canoe’s filling as fast as it can.” And then they two applied themselves to the work of getting rid of the water with their utmost energy.

Little by little the canoes crept nearer the point, the Indians keeping to their paddling with an unflagging endurance that was really marvellous. Bred to the canoe as the Indians of the plains to the saddle, they were capable of maintaining the struggle against the storm for hours yet, provided the canoes did not become waterlogged and unmanageable. Even in the midst of his anxiety Rae could not help admiring the unbroken regularity of their stroke, and the wonderful skill with which Hi-ling-a in the stern evaded the onset of the waves, and kept many a foam-crested billow from breaking right on board and swamping them beyond recovery.

At length by dint of unremitting toil and unfailing skill in seamanship Rose Point was reached, and the fleet of canoes turned due east in order to circumnavigate it. But just at this moment the storm burst upon them with a sudden access of fury that there was no possibility of withstanding. To face it was utterly impracticable; to fly before it meant to be driven far out into Hecate Strait, and lost beyond a peradventure.

Only one alternative remained, and that was to make for the shore under the lee of the point, and attempt a landing no matter how fierce the breakers might be or inhospitable the rocky beach. Hi-ling-a promptly turned his canoe shoreward, the others as promptly followed his

example, and, summoning all their remaining strength for one supreme effort, the paddlers bent to their work while the spray hissed savagely over them, and the billows sprang at their frail craft like wild beasts furious for their prey.

It was a tremendous struggle, the result of which hung in the balance for many thrilling minutes. Confined to the position of mere spectators, yet with their own lives at stake, the boys cowered down in the stern of their canoes seeking protection from the blows of the waves continually breaking over the gunwale. They fully realized their danger, but bore up bravely against it, Rae feeling it to be incumbent upon him to maintain a manly front in the presence of the Haidas, and Freckles nobly imitating the example thus set him.

Little by little the shore was neared, but strive as they might to peer through the spume and spray, no gap in the line of breakers offered a chance of a safe landing.

"We'll be dashed to pieces, Freckles, sure," said Rae, referring more particularly, however, to the canoes than to themselves. "There's no good place to land. We'll just have to go it blind and trust to luck."

He was right enough. Expert in every art of canoeing as the Haidas were, they had reached a crisis when all skill went for nothing. They could only commit themselves to the boiling surf in the hope of somehow surviving the ordeal.

On they urged their canoes, rapidly becoming water-

logged and unmanageable. The breakers began to roar and hiss about them like avenging furies; a few yards more and they would be in their midst.

As soon as the landing was decided upon, Rae had rolled up the rifles and ammunition, each in a separate blanket, and now he handed Freckles his, saying in a steady though sad tone, —

“We’ll want them if we get through, so hold on tight to yours.”

A moment later and the crisis came. The paddlers threw aside their paddles and seized their spears and bows. Old Hi-ling-a rose to his feet, and stood looking shoreward with steadfast countenance, while he called out encouragingly to his men. Rae and Freckles grasping their precious bundles tightly prepared to leap as soon as the canoe struck.

It was as sudden as a flash of lightning. Caught up on the back of a huge breaker the canoe poised for one thrilling instant upon its foaming crest, and then was flung forward as though it were a mere shaving. With a stunning crash it smote the pitiless rocks, and fell into irreparable wreck.

The shock hurled all its occupants forward, but instantly they recovered themselves, and sprang into the frothing waves that strove hard to draw them back to destruction. Freckles happily leaped clear of the undertow, and, albeit a little bruised, scrambled out of the breakers’ reach, still retaining his hold upon the rifle. But Rae was not so fortunate. As he

jumped, his foot slipped, and he fell right into the thick of the undertow, which promptly laid hold upon him, and would have drawn him back to death had not the old chief, whose keen eyes seemed to miss nothing, no matter what the turmoil might be, observed his perilous plight, and, stretching out his long right arm, caught him by the collar and dragged him to land by an almost superhuman effort.

By great good luck every one of those in Hi-ling-a's canoe made good their landing; but not so fortunate were some of the others, for when all had gathered together it was found that six were missing, including two boys about his own age that Rae had noticed in one of the other canoes, and whose lifeless bodies were presently cast up by the sea, which had worked its cruel will upon them.

There was no time for lamentation then, however. That must be left until the return to the village. The one thing now was to consider what should be done in the difficult circumstances which surrounded the once imposing but now most miserable war-party.

Nothing had been saved from the wreck save their implements of war. Rae and Freckles had each had their rifle and ammunition intact, and all the Indians had either bow or spear, and many of them both.

The boys had also saved their hatchets and hunting-knives, but the provisions were all lost, and most of the blankets.

The outlook was certainly a dreary one as the sur-

vivors, drenched and dishevelled, and most of them more or less bruised, gathered around the chief for comfort and consolation.

The old man bore himself with a stoical dignity that was admirable to behold. He had no thought of being prostrated even by a disaster apparently so overwhelming, but at once set himself to put heart into his men, and to advise as to what should be done.

By this time the storm began to show signs of blowing over. Fortunately it had not been accompanied with rain, and everything being dry on shore, the Indians were presently able to produce a fire, before which the whole party could in a short time dry their dripping clothing, and become more comfortable on that score.

The next thought naturally enough was food, and for this they must needs turn to the forest which stretched dense and pathless as far as the eye could reach. Taking their bows and spears, a number of the Indians went off in quest of game. Rae would have liked to accompany them, but Hi-ling-a detained him. The shrewd old man knew little of the country round about, having been accustomed to make all his expeditions by water, and he did not think it wise to run any unnecessary risks. They were no doubt still a long way from the Masset villages, yet they might chance upon a war-party of that tribe, and in that case it would be better for Rae and Freckles to be with him rather than wandering through the woods after game.

Rae understood something of this, and it helped to reconcile him to biding by the fire, although, having assured himself that his rifle and ammunition were not the worse for the shipwreck, he was anxious to give the savages further proof of his skill as a shot. "It just puzzles me," said he to Freckles, "what's going to become of us now. We must be a long, long way from Skidegate, and perhaps the Indians don't know how to get back by land. You see they do all their travelling by canoe, and I don't suppose they'll feel like going ahead with their war-party after being wrecked. What do you think?"

Freckles scratched his head and tried to look very wise, but could contribute no enlightening suggestion. He had been buffeted by fate so long and so severely that he was becoming a sort of fatalist, accepting each new complication in his affairs as simply another item in a programme that had to be gone through to the bitter end whether he liked it or not.

In this respect he presented a striking contrast to Rae, who would fain be the master of his own fate so far as might be possible, and who sought to reconsider everything that happened, and desired a say in all that was coming to pass concerning himself.

"I just wish I could talk their language," continued Rae, taking Freckles's silence for granted. "I know what I'd advise them to do, and that is to make for the village as far as they know how, and get a lot of new canoes if they want to try again."

“That’s the best thing,” assented Freckles. “You tell the chief, Rae, and perhaps he’ll do it.”

“I’m going to try,” said Rae, and forthwith he went over to Hi-ling-a’s side, and proceeded to try and make himself understood by him. But all his vigorous pantomime and eloquent speech went for nothing.

The utmost the old man could make out was that Rae wanted to go back to the village, and at this he shook his head most decidedly. He had other plans than this for him, and an immediate return to Skidegate was not one of them.

In fact what the chief had decided to do was worthy of his daring and determined character. Seriously as his expedition had been disorganized by the disaster, after carefully reviewing the whole situation, he had come to the conclusion that the best horn to seize of the dilemma in which he found himself was to continue on against the Massets.

He argued this way. They were twice as far from their own village as they were from their enemies. Only six out of the whole number had been lost, all their weapons had been saved, and most important of all, Rae and Freckles, upon whom he relied chiefly for victory, had come off unscathed, and with the firearms uninjured.

By a sudden descent upon the Massets from the forest, whence they would never be expecting attack, an easy conquest might be won; and then once in possession of the village they could supply themselves with canoes,

and load them with plunder and food, returning in triumph by sea.

It was a brilliant plan of campaign, worthy in every respect of its brave and sagacious projector, and he was determined on its execution. In due time the hunting-party returned, laden with grouse, ducks, and squirrels, which their arrows had brought down, and which were soon roasting before the fire, and sending out a most appetizing odor that the hungry people sniffed eagerly.

There was abundance for all, and after they had dined heartily and were feeling in good spirits again, Hi-ling-a thought the time propitious for making known his plan.

It was not at first received with unanimous approval, and several of the party expressed their dissent very decidedly, which roused the old man to unusual energy of speech, so that the discussion waxed warm.

“My goodness! I wish I knew what they’re talking about,” exclaimed Rae. “It’s too bad we can’t make out a word of it, and I feel sure they’re arguing about what they’ll do. If I could only talk to them I’d say to hurry back, and I guess a good many of them think the same thing too.”

He had read the faces of the opposition aright. They were for an immediate return, but the old chief was not to be moved from his purpose. He argued, and pleaded, and promised, and threatened, until at length he carried his point. One by one the objectors were overcome, until finally the great shout which followed an especially earnest

appeal showed that he had won the day, and that all had been brought round to his side.

"It's no use," said Rae gloomily; "they're going ahead. See how fierce they look. I suppose they think that since they've got our rifles they're bound to beat anything, but they're much mistaken if they think I'm going to shoot anybody just to please them. If I have to do it to save my life, I will of course; but I'm certainly not going to kill people who never did me any harm — are you, Freckles?"

"No, sir, not a bit of it," responded Freckles, with a degree of decision most unusual for him, but which was none the less entirely sincere, for there was nothing in the world so repugnant to him as the thought of being the means of anybody's death. Short of being killed himself, he would endure anything rather than take another's life.

"Look here, Freckles," Rae went on, lowering his voice to a whisper, although no one else but the one addressed would have been any the wiser had he spoken in a shout, "I'll tell you what we'll do. If we do attack those Indians up there, and Hi-ling-a expects us to fire at them, we'll just aim away over their heads so as not to hit any of them, and then whoever's killed on their side we won't be to blame, anyway."

"That's it, Rae, that's the way to do," assented Freckles, rubbing his hands gleefully, for the idea of being made to take part in a battle had been bothering him sorely; "and then, of course, if the other Indians see

that we're not doing them any harm, why, they won't hurt us, will they?"

"They oughtn't to at all events," said Rae; "but," and here his face clouded with serious thought, "you know, Freckles, if any of them do try to kill us, why, we'll just have to fire at them, though I devoutly hope they won't, for I don't want to be killed, nor do I want to kill anybody else."

While they were thus talking together the old chief was giving final directions to his followers, and soon the start was made in Indian file, a veteran hunter, expert in woodcraft, taking the lead, and the others following close behind, Hi-ling-a and the two boys bringing up the rear.

The going was difficult and toilsome in the extreme, the forest being dense, and filled with underbrush that stubbornly opposed the war-party's advance. Although the way was to a certain extent broken by those who were ahead, Rae and Freckles found it very fatiguing, and ere long began to falter and fall behind, so that the chief, thinking that they were getting lazy, spoke sharply to them, evidently bidding them mend their pace.

"It's all very well for him to tell us to hurry up — for I suppose that's what he's driving at," said Rae in a tone that was almost sulky, "but I'm doing the best I can; and what's more, I'll be giving out altogether pretty soon, and they'll just have to carry me if they want to hurry along as they are doing."

"And I'm tired out too," replied Freckles despondently.

“Do you think they’d carry me if I can’t walk any further?”

“We’ll just try,” said Rae, his face brightening with a look of mischief. “We’ll sit down and refuse to walk another step, and see what they’ll do,” and suiting his action to the word he dropped wearily on the ground, Freckles at once imitating his example.

The instant they did so old Hi-ling-a swung round, and, looking very irate, began to scold them in great style. Rae tried to explain as best he could, but to no purpose; and finally the old man, his indignation reaching fever-heat, laid hands upon the boys, and dragged them to their feet, giving them a push forward after the others.

Rae, however, was not to be intimidated in this manner. He really was worn out; for the exposure in the storm, the misery of the shipwreck, and the lack of opportunity to rest and recruit had exhausted his strength. He felt perfectly confident that the Indians would not go on without him, nor would they venture to show any real harshness towards him, seeing that they counted so much upon his rifle to aid them in their undertaking.

Accordingly, having taken a few more steps, he threw himself down again, exclaiming in his most despairing accents, —

“It’s no use; I’m done out, and I can’t take another step.”

The chief bent over him, and gave him a long and searching look which he bore without blanching. Then

seeming satisfied with his scrutiny, he shouted out after the rest of the party, half-a-dozen of whom responded to the summons. To these he said something in a half-persuasive, half-commanding tone that at first evidently did not meet their approval, but to which they presently assented, manifestly to the old man's relief.

What it was the boys quickly learned, for two of the strongest members of the band came to them, and made signs for them to get upon their backs. Hardly able to contain his laughter, Rae mounted his human steed, Freckles doing the same after his usual awkward fashion, and then off they started again, pick-a-back, Rae managing to tip Freckles a wink that sent a broad smile over his homely countenance.

The progress of the burden-bearers was necessarily much slower than before they were thus handicapped, yet it was surprising how rapidly they did get along; and frequent changes being resorted to, the march was kept up steadily all that day, save for a couple of hours' stoppage at noon for dinner, if the mid-day meal of roasted grouse with no accompaniment might be so designated.

Of course the boys did not need to be carried continuously. They walked as much as they could, and Hiling-a evidently grew better pleased with them as they did their best.

A good night's rest made the toils of the following day easier to be borne, and towards afternoon the signs of growing excitement and anxiety in the party told Rae that they must be nearing the enemy's territory. The

forest had become more open, enabling the Indians to keep closer together, and they all seemed to be sharply on the look-out for anything that might indicate the presence of their foe. Depending mainly upon taking them by surprise—for their approach to be detected would mean, most probably, the ruin of their enterprise—the utmost caution was therefore exercised as they pushed forward, Hi-ling-a himself now being the leader.

CHAPTER XV.

TAKEN BY THE MASSETS.

THE excitement, though necessarily subdued, was all the more intense as the war-party crept silently forward, Hi-ling-a leading the way with the noiseless step of a panther, and the others keeping close up so as to be ready to act the instant the command came.

Yet nothing was to be seen of the Massets, and they must be entirely ignorant of their danger.

Happily for them the Haidas were overtaken by darkness before they reached striking distance of their village, and astute Hi-ling-a, instead of advancing further, retreated a little ; for it was a characteristic of the Indian nature not to make a night attack, however favorable the opportunity.

That night the Haidas went to bed supperless, for no fire could be lighted ; nor, indeed, had they any game to cook had they had one.

Rae grumbled greatly over this, but there was no help for it, and in very ill humor he wrapped himself up in his blanket, feeling that he was a much-abused individual.

The Indians settled themselves down to sleep with a

placidity that would have been strange enough in view of their situation, but for the fact that during the hours of darkness they were in no more danger of attack from the Massets than the Massets were of an attack from them; and so they could curl up in their blankets with easy minds until the return of the sun would send them forth to victory or defeat.

With the break of day the whole party was astir, and, there being no breakfast to prepare, was soon on the march again. The boys by this time were feeling decidedly faint for lack of food, and had the march been kept up at the rate of the preceding day, they would again have needed to be borne pick-a-back.

But the advance now was made with exceeding caution and slowness, so that they had no difficulty in keeping their place. Hunger, exposure, excitement, and exertion had told heavily upon their young frames, and they were both in a very dejected state of mind.

Rae, indeed, was growing desperate. The whole proceeding was against his inclination, and his feeling now was that the sooner it ended in some way the better.

"Oh my! I do wish it was all over," he groaned; "I'm sick of the business."

"So am I," chorussed Freckles. "It's no fun for us, that's certain."

Whether or not it would prove fun for the war-party was now shortly to be seen. They were getting very close to the village, which, like their own, was built along the beach a little above high-water mark, with the

forest coming down to the rear of the houses, and thus affording a good covering for the attack.

Hi-ling-a now began to dispose his men so as to make them most effective. He divided them into three bands, in order that an onset might be made at the middle and at each end of the village simultaneously, thereby giving the idea of a larger force being engaged than was actually the case, and trusting to the confusion of the moment to prevent the mistake being discovered before victory had been gained. The old chief took charge of the middle detachment, having Rae and Freckles at his side.

“We’re in for it now,” said Rae, trying to look cheerful; “and I’d like to know how we’re coming out of it.”

As silently as panthers they all crept forward, until the roofs of the houses and the tall carved posts before their doors could be discerned through the trees. Then, signing to the boys to have their rifles ready, Hi-ling-a prepared himself and his men for the furious rush which was, he hoped, to decide the matter offhand.

With bows and spears grasped tightly, and faces and forms quivering with suppressed excitement, the Haidas stood like statues, awaiting their leader’s command. It came with a suddenness that was fairly startling. At the chief’s gesture both rifles rang out sharply on the clear morning air, a hoarse wild shout from the Indians followed, and then all three bands plunged down upon the village.

But Rae, and Freckles with him, hung behind. The fight was not of his choosing, and he had no special interest in the result. He could not see, therefore, that it was

in any wise incumbent upon him to risk his life needlessly. He would let the savages fight it out amongst themselves, and take the best care of himself and Freckles that was possible under the circumstances.

From their post in the rear of the village the boys could see something, and hear more of the conflict that was raging. Evidently the surprise had not been as complete as Hi-ling-a hoped, and he was finding an unexpectedly sturdy resistance.

Determined to lie low until it should be all over, the boys made their way to a dense clump of underbrush, whence they could look out upon a part of the village street, and thus watch the progress of the struggle.

At first the advantage undoubtedly lay with the Haidas, and they bid fair to have matters all their own way. But after the first shock of surprise, the Massets, who were in strong force, all the men happening to be at home, rallied bravely, and seeing that the attacking party was not a very large one, set upon their assailants with such vigor that they in their turn began to waver.

Seeing this, Hi-ling-a waxed desperate, and performed prodigies of valor, dealing deadly thrusts with his long spear, and doing the work of two warriors, until, unfortunately, a well-aimed arrow found its way to his breast, and, stricken to the heart, the brave old chieftain threw up his arms with an awful groan, and fell prostrate, never to fight another battle.

His downfall sent terror into the hearts of his follow-

ers. They had already lost many of their numbers, and the survivors determined to seek safety in flight. Without more ado they turned their backs upon their opponents and took to their heels, vanishing into the forest with the Massets in hot pursuit.

As the latter passed the spot where the boys were hidden, several of them caught sight of the strangers, and at once surrounded them with threatening looks and ready weapons.

But Rae, laying down his rifle, held out his empty hands, at the same time summoning up his most pleasant expression; and Freckles doing the same, the savages saw at once there was nothing to be feared from them, and that they would prove easy capture.

Still keeping their spears pointed, as though they would prevent all possibility of treachery, they motioned for the boys to move towards the village. They promptly obeyed, and soon were on the beach before the houses, where a crowd of men, women, and children surrounded them, with staring eyes of curiosity and suspicion.

Not that the Massets were unaccustomed to the sight of white men; but they did not understand the presence of these two boys with a war-party of their worst enemies, and flushed as they were with victory, and full of the lust of blood, there was serious danger lest it might go hard with the helpless captives, who were not able to explain how they came thither.

The chief of the village was among the pursuers of the fleeing Haidas, and until his return nothing would

be done with the white boys; so they were permitted to seat themselves upon a log in front of one of the houses, while the crowd continued to gaze at them with a persistent directness that was not at all easy to bear.

“What are we in for now, Freckles?” asked Rae, with a sardonic smile, his crowding misfortunes having engendered a reckless mood. “Do you think they’ll eat us? They look ugly enough to do it.”

“O Rae!” murmured Freckles with a shudder, drawing nearer his companion; “you don’t mean it, do you? Would they really eat us?”

He looked so appalled at the notion that Rae, in the very midst of his misery of mind, could not forbear breaking into a laugh.

“You poor chap,” said he, laying his hand soothingly upon Freckles’s shoulder, “please don’t look quite so scared. I don’t mean it, for I don’t believe these Indians eat people; anyway, if they do, they’ve got enough of the Haidas to last them a good while.”

True enough, nearly one-half of the unfortunate Haidas had met their death at the hands of those they hoped to conquer so easily, and were now lying stretched upon the shore with their life blood dyeing the sand.

Presently a series of triumphant shouts announced the return of the pursuing party. They did not come back with empty hands either, but had so many prisoners that it seemed as if the entire remainder of the Haidas must have been captured. These prisoners of war appeared utterly cast down. They had little doubt as to what their

fate would be, for in these inter-tribal conflicts there was no mercy shown the vanquished.

“Poor fellows!” said Rae, forgetting for the moment his own critical position as he looked upon these dejected prisoners of war. “They thought they were going to do great things, but they made a big mistake this time, and I’m afraid from the looks of things they will never have another chance.”

Just then the chief came up and inspected the boys with undisguised interest. He was a stalwart man, with a frank, open countenance, and a rather pleasing expression; and as Rae returned his scrutiny fearlessly, he began to feel more hopeful of his fate. There was nothing cruel or unkind in the savage’s mien, and he might treat them as well as poor old Hi-ling-a had done.

After a moment of rather trying silence, the chief signed for the boys to get up and follow him, which they gladly did, for they were very weary of the attentions of the crowd. They were led into a house much similar to the one which had been their home at Skidegate, and some women having made their appearance, were presently served with a platter of smoking fish, which, after the long fast they had endured, was inexpressibly welcome.

They at once fell to with great vigor, to the manifest satisfaction of the chief, who watched them emptying the platter with an approving smile that certainly boded nothing but good, and whose significance was not lost upon Rae.

“He’s going to be kind to us,” he said in a relieved

tone to Freckles; "you see if he isn't. Whatever they do with the other prisoners, they won't harm us."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" exclaimed Freckles. "But," he added, "I'm so sorry for the others. I wish they'd let them off too."

Rae shook his head with sorrowful decision.

"There's not much chance of that," he said. "Father often told me what they do when they take prisoners this way. I devoutly hope that we won't have to see it. We must stay inside here if the chief will let us."

The Masset village was a scene of wild rejoicing and revelry that day. The corpses of the dead Haidas were gathered together in a pile, and the prisoners, bound hand and foot, ranged in a circle round it. Then the whole population, except the old women, who were hard at work preparing the materials for a feast, amused themselves heaping every conceivable indignity upon the dead and injury upon the living, whom they thus tortured before they added their bodies to the awful pile.

This continued with little intermission throughout the day and on into the night, when the ruddy glare of blazing fires lent an additional horror to the proceeding. At last the Massets growing weary of their cruel sports, the wretched prisoners, many of whom were already half-dead, were despatched with brutal blows, and their bodies flung upon the heap, while the worn-out revellers went to their houses to recruit their energies with sleep.

To their unspeakable relief the boys were not required to be witnesses of these barbarities, and before they went

out next morning the bodies had all vanished, they knew not whither, and there was nothing to show what had taken place save some dark stains upon the sand.

So far as they could tell they were themselves in no more danger of personal violence than they had been among the Haidas of Skidegate. Whether it was because of their youth, or because the Indians thought it would pay them better to keep them safe in order to obtain a ransom for them, now that the passion of the fight and the subsequent rejoicing was over, they met with nothing but good-natured if curious looks from their new captors, and no restraint being placed upon their movements, soon felt themselves as much at their ease as they had done in Skidegate.

The young chieftain impressed Rae very favorably. He was evidently of a bright, amiable temper, and had a sunny smile that was very attractive. He seemed quite anxious to make the boys understand that he was kindly disposed towards them, and they on their part responded heartily to his advances, so that although they could not speak a word of each other's language, they nevertheless came soon to have an excellent mutual understanding.

He showed great interest in their rifles, and Rae fired a couple of shots out across the water for his benefit, the sight of the bullet skipping across the smooth surface of the water being hailed with lively satisfaction.

After Rae had fired twice the Indian's interest grew so keen that nothing would do but that he must try his own

hand at shooting; so taking up the rifle, he made signs for Rae to load it.

Rae felt afraid to trust him with it, but did not like to refuse lest it should make him angry. Having carefully loaded it, therefore, he attempted to show the chief how he should hold it for firing.

This, however, the chief resented. He had been watching Rae closely when he was firing, and felt quite confident he knew exactly what to do. Accordingly he raised the rifle, and after looking proudly around, as though to say to the spectators, of which a number had gathered, "See me make the white man's magic. I can use his thunder and lightning stick too," he shut both his eyes tight and pulled the trigger. Close following the report came a howl of pain, and, dropping the rifle as though it had been red-hot, the chief clapped both his hands to his right jaw, and danced around yelling out something which no doubt meant, —

"Oh my! I'm hurt! I'm hurt! The thunder and lightning stick has broken my mouth!"

Rae at first was quite alarmed, not so much indeed on account of the chief as of himself and Freckles, for if the Indian were made angry by the mishap, he might visit his anger upon them, innocent though they were.

But his apprehensions were happily altogether unfounded. Instead of being incensed by his experience, the Indian chief was filled with profound respect for Rae, because he could manage so dangerous an affair without any trouble. He had not noted that while Rae placed



"Close following the report came a howl of pain."

the butt of the rifle against his shoulder, and held it firmly there, he had rested it against his cheek, and he therefore concluded that since the white boy suffered no discomfort from the firing, he must be made of much sterner stuff than himself.

Life in the Masset village soon settled down to very much the same thing that it was at Skidegate. There was so little difference between the people, both tribes being branches of the Haida nation, that Rae wondered why they should be at war at all. Their manners and customs were very similar, and even their dialect had much the same sound. In every respect the boys were just as well off now as they had been with the other Indians; but what gave Rae great concern was the thought of his father coming to Skidegate in quest of him and not finding him there. So far as he knew not one of the war-party had survived. There would therefore be entire ignorance of its fate at Skidegate, and his father's anxious inquiries would meet with no response.

That on being disappointed there he would come on up to Masset was hardly possible, unless he had some hint of what had happened, and who was there to give him this?

Pondering the situation, however, Rae could find small ground for hope in that direction; but instead of yielding to despair, he began to think at once of some other way of escape. A permanent residence among the Indians was of course not to be considered for a moment. Escape he must somehow, whether secretly or with the

savages' consent, as by ransom — the only question was how it might be accomplished. After much thinking a way suggested itself, and with a brightened countenance he explained it to Freckles.

“There's only one chance for us now that I can see,” said he, “and the dear only knows when that will come. It's this. You know these people go over to the mainland every year to get their oulachan grease from the Tsimshians, and to buy blankets. Now we must manage somehow to make them understand that if they will take us over with them, and let the folks at Fort Simpson know they have us, they can get a good ransom for us; do you see?”

“To be sure,” responded Freckles, his face brightening up as he grasped the idea; “they don't want to keep us here always. We're no good to them, are we?”

“No good that I can see, except as curiosities,” returned Rae, smiling grimly; “but they might have a fancy for keeping us all the same. They might want to adopt us, you know. They do that sort of thing quite often. Now, how would you like,” he continued, pointing to a bent and shrivelled hag of a woman, who was slowly creeping past, looking more like a witch than a human being, “to be adopted by her, and to be her son?”

Freckles lifted up his hands in horror at the suggestion.

“No indeed,” he exclaimed energetically; “not a bit of it.”

Rae laughed at his perturbation.

“Don’t be scared,” said he; “there’s not much likelihood in it, but I’ve heard of such things being done. Hullo! here comes the chief, and he looks as if he had something to say to us.”

The chief, whose name was Sing-ai, signifying sunrise, had already taken a warm liking to the boys, and felt most kindly disposed toward them, and he was now approaching them in order to explain a scheme that was in his mind to give them some amusement.

With great animation he sought to make his meaning clear, but all that Rae could make out was, that he proposed to take them out hunting, though whether the game was to be human beings or wild animals he could not clearly determine.

He felt pretty sure, however, that it was the latter, and signified his willingness to take a hand at it, whereat the chief seemed much gratified.

The next day quite a large party set out, Sing-ai acting as leader and having the boys by his side. They directed their course toward the forest to the north-west of the village, and it was not long before they were swallowed up in its leafy depths.

Being thoroughly recruited by the rest of the past two days, Rae and Freckles found no difficulty in keeping their place in the procession. The country was more open than it had been further south, and the travelling was consequently much easier. Rae had many temptations to try his skill on different kinds of game they met with in their progress, but Sing-ai checked him the first

time he raised his rifle, and made him understand that he wanted him to reserve his fire for the present.

A little before mid-day the chief's reason for the action was revealed. Making their way with great caution to the summit of a ridge, they looked down into the valley beyond it, and there, feeding in blissful ignorance of their proximity, was a small herd of wapiti, consisting of a fine stag, several does, and a couple of fawns.

Sing-ai's eye glistened at the sight, and pointing first at the deer and then at Rae's rifle, he nodded his head, and smiled as though to say, "Now you can fire. That's the reason I did not want you to do so before."

Making sure that he had a good cap on, Rae, resting the rifle upon the root of a tree, and striving to control the nervousness which would assert itself, for both the importance of the game and the presence of so many spectators had their effect upon him, he took long and careful aim at the stag just behind the fore-shoulder, and fired.

At the instant of the report, the wapiti sprang high into the air, made a frantic rush forward, and then fell over on its side kicking its legs convulsively.

With a shout of delight the chief leaped down the slope, followed by all his men, the most of whom set off in pursuit of the does and fawns, in the hope of securing some of them also.

Sing-ai ran right up to the struggling stag, and catching him by the antlers tried to cut his throat with a seaman's sheath-knife of which he was very proud, and

which he had got in barter over on the mainland some time before. But it was a poor affair, rusty of blade and dull of edge, and the pain it inflicted only served to arouse the dying animal into a final spasm of energy.

Regaining its feet by a frantic effort, it lunged forward furiously at Sing-ai and threw him to the ground, once more falling itself, and this time in such a way as to pin the Indian down; one tine of the antlers indeed piercing his arm, and compelling him to shout for assistance with undisguised terror in his tone.

Rae had paused after firing to reload his rifle, but seeing the chief's perilous position he did not wait to complete the operation.

Dropping his rifle he snatched up Freckles's, which was still loaded, and sprang down the slope to where the deer and the chief were engaged in so close a struggle that he did not dare fire for fear of the bullet doing more harm than he desired.

But he had his hunting-knife in his belt, and drawing this he threw himself into the conflict, thrusting the keen blade deep into the wapiti's throat.

What the Indian's knife had failed to do, his accomplished at the first stroke. A great gush of blood followed the steel as it was withdrawn, and once more the stag fell, this time never to rise again.

With some difficulty Sing-ai released himself and rose to his feet. His face bore an expression of mingled surprise and chagrin, as though to say, —

“You got me out of a nasty scrape that time, didn't

you, but what was I thinking of anyway that I got into it?"

The wound in his arm evidently hurt him sorely, and it was bleeding a good deal, so he made signs to Rae to bind it up tightly with a thong in such a way as to compress the artery and stop the flow of blood.

This done, he was ready to give attention to the wapiti, and they looked him over together. He was a very fine large specimen of his kind, being in prime condition, and having a splendid spread of antlers. With the assistance of a couple of his men, the chief proceeded to cut the creature up; and not being interested in that process, Rae strolled up the other side of the valley to see how those who had gone in pursuit of the rest of the herd might be faring.

He met them as they were returning, their sole prize being a poor little fawn that they had managed to run down, and he could not help feeling somewhat proud of the difference between his trophy of the chase and theirs.

On their return to the village there was great rejoicing over the slaying of the stag, and that night a feast was held at which there were dances and songs that seemed to Rae remarkably like those they had seen and heard at Skidegate.

Sing-ai, in spite of his sore arm, took a very active part, one time coming before the assembly in his finest array, and having the wapiti's antlers upon his head while he moved around the circle with a slow dignified step amid a chorus of grunts and cries that meant applause.

He was very anxious for Rae and Freckles to show what they could do in the dancing line, but they refused until at length, after repeated invitations, Rae, not wishing to seem discourteous, seeing how handsomely the chief was treating them, said to his companion, —

“Look here, Freckles, you whistle for me and I’ll see if I can’t give them a bit of a Highland fling.”

Now Freckles had a rare gift in whistling, and he had no objection to displaying it if Rae wanted to give an exhibition of his ability on the light fantastic toe, so he at once set up his piping shrill and brisk, and Rae stepping out into the clear space before the fire began to dance.

At first he felt awkward and constrained, but soon the spirit of the thing seized upon him, and as Freckles’s music grew merrier he threw more and more vim into the exercise, snapping his fingers above his head, and giving vent to exultant cries as he sprang higher and higher from the ground, until at last reaching the climax with a wild whoop worthy of a native, he flung himself down completely out of breath, but feeling very well satisfied with his performance.

The savage spectators enjoyed it immensely. There was so much more animation in it than in their own dances that they would have liked to encore Rae; but once was enough for him, and he slipped away soon after to the chief’s house, where he and Freckles had been made to feel entirely at home.

As usual the Indians kept up their revelry until far

into the night, not betaking themselves to their beds until they were entirely worn out, and in a condition to sleep for the next twenty-four hours.

The boys had been asleep for a couple of hours before Sing-ai and the other members of the household returned, and Rae was awakened by the noise of their talk and their movements.

After they had all settled down and were sleeping heavily he found himself very wide awake, and the night being warm, and the air of the house close and oppressive, he thought he would go outside for a breath of fresh air.

Moving gently so as to disturb no one, not even Freckles, he made his way out of the house. It was clear bright moonlight and the whole village was wrapped in absolute silence, not even the dogs being astir, and with a delicious sense of being his own master for a brief while at least, Rae moved quietly down towards the shore, where the waves were softly lapping the pebbles. His thoughts went out to his father, and he wondered where he might be at that moment and whether he had yet started from Fort Camosun in the jaunty little *Plover*. Then his eyes grew moist and a lump rose in his throat as he pictured to himself his father's bitter disappointment when he would reach Skidegate and find no trace of his son. Would he think him dead, or would he surmise what had happened, and come on to Masset determined to find him at any cost?

While pondering over these questions, to which he

himself could only hazard unsatisfactory guesses, Rae glanced out towards the open sea just at the moment that the moon's beams, making a broad bright path across the shimmering waves, threw into prominence something, the sight of which caused him to spring to his feet with an exclamation of surprise, and with a wild thrill of hope at his heart.

Clearly outlined in the midst of the silver light was a schooner gliding smoothly along before the gentle night breeze and evidently making for Masset Inlet.

"Can that be the *Plover*?" cried Rae breathlessly. "Thank God if it is!" Then after a pause, during which he strove to make out more distinctly the slowly approaching vessel, "It's white men anyway, and we must get out to her somehow before the Indians know she is here."

Making his way back to the chief's house as silently as he could, he waked up Freckles, and, putting his hand over his mouth to signify that he should ask no questions, whispered to him to take his rifle and follow him.

They got outside and down to the shore without anything stirring, and then Rae pointed out the schooner, now in plainer sight than before.

Freckles threw up his hands in delight, but discreetly refrained from any other expression of his feelings.

"We must get a canoe," whispered Rae, "and put off in it at once."

They had not long to seek among the many canoes drawn up on the beach, and soon found a small one that

they could launch without difficulty. Placing in it their rifles, they carried it carefully out into the water, reckless of wet feet, and clambered in, every sound their movements made sending a thrill of fear through their hearts.

Once safely aboard they grasped the paddles and set to work with all their might, Freckles splashing badly, and causing the canoe to rock ominously with his unskilful strokes.

They had got but a hundred yards from the shore when they heard a shout, and looking back saw Sing-ai rushing down to the beach with furious strides.

CHAPTER XVI.

RESCUED BY THE RUSSIANS.

AT the sight of Sing-ai Freckles cried out in terror, and, missing a stroke with his paddle, came within an ace of upsetting the canoe. But for the skill in the management of this ticklish craft that Rae had acquired on Camosun Bay, they certainly would have been tumbled into the water, and their attempt at flight summarily brought to an end.

Happily, by a deft movement Rae restored equilibrium, and shouted to his companion,—

“Take care there, Freckles, will you! Don’t lose your head, or they will catch us sure. Keep cool now, and paddle away for dear life.”

After the first fright Freckles, however, regained his balance, and the two boys managed to make their light bark fairly fly through the water, Rae casting frequent anxious glances behind him to see how the chief was getting on.

Fortunately for them his progress was slow, for the reason that he found difficulty in arousing some of his men, they were so heavy with sleep after their feast and

dance. The boys had consequently more than doubled their lead before a canoe containing four Indians was launched in their pursuit.

But once this canoe was well under way it began to overhaul them at a rate that caused Rae's heart to sink, though it did not diminish the energy with which he plied his paddle. The pursuers seemed to be going as fast again as the pursued, and the issue of the race could hardly be long in doubt.

But all this time the schooner was steadily though slowly drawing nearer, and those on board, if keeping a sharp look-out, must soon get an inkling of what was taking place. This thought came to Rae as he dashed his paddle in deeply, and, bidding Freckles stop for a moment, he stood up in the canoe and shouted with all his might, —

“Schooner ahoy! Help us! We're chased by the Indians.”

Then without waiting for an answer, he resumed his strenuous strokes.

That his hail reached the schooner was evident from an answer coming to him through the warm still air; but either because of the distance or of his own excessive agitation, he could not make out its meaning, so he paused again and sent another appeal for help across the water.

To it also there was a response no more intelligible than the first, and Rae began to wonder if it really could be the *Plover*, as certainly there was nothing familiar

about the voice of the person answering him. Not daring to lose any more time in this way, for Sing-ai's canoe was gaining upon him hand-over-fist, Rae gave his whole attention to his paddling until the Indians were within fifty yards of him, and he was about the same distance from the schooner. Then he felt that he must make one more effort to enlist the aid of those on board, and cried out passionately, —

“For Heaven's sake, help us! Stop that other canoe. Those Indians are after us.”

Just as he finished a man appeared in the bow of the schooner, and the next moment the report of a rifle rang out with startling effect, while a bullet struck the water close to the bow of the Indian canoe.

“Hurrah!” gasped Rae, who had about reached the limit of his strength; “they're helping us. We're all right.”

Looking back, he saw to his intense joy that the report of the rifle, and the splash of the bullet so dangerously near, had made the Indians halt. They were evidently conferring among themselves as to what they should do.

As if to help them to a conclusion, another report came from the schooner, and another bullet tore up the water, this time so close to the canoe that some drops were splashed into Sing-ai's face.

This second warning settled the matter. Uttering harsh cries of disappointment and rage, the Indians turned about and paddled furiously shoreward, abandoning further pursuit.

“Thank God!” exclaimed Rae, with a fervent sigh of relief and gratitude; “they’ve given up. Paddle away for the schooner, Freckles.”

As they approached her, Rae saw that it was not the *Plover* at all, but a larger vessel, and that it was a number of entirely unfamiliar faces the bright moonlight showed him looking over the bulwarks at the canoe with inquiring interest.

“Oh, thank you, thank you,” he panted. “You fired that rifle just in time. They nearly caught us.”

Running up alongside the schooner, he bid Freckles climb on board by means of the rope one of the crew offered, and then followed himself.

When he gained the deck and looked about him, he was surprised to find a number of strange faces gazing at him with eager curiosity, and to be addressed in a language entirely foreign to him.

Turning to the speaker, who was evidently one of the officers, he said, —

“I can’t understand you; I am English.”

At the sound of the last word the officer pricked up his ears, and nodded his head to show that he understood. He then disappeared into the after-cabin, and after a minute returned, having with him a young man a couple of years older than Rae, who at once went up to him and held up his hand with a smile of courteous greeting.

“You are English, eh? I speak English a little. You tell me and I tell him,” pointing to the officer, who was, as Rae rightly judged, the captain of the schooner.

Rae at once entered into explanations, speaking with great earnestness, being anxious to produce the deepest impression possible upon his new-found protectors, so that they might make his cause their own, and not give him back to the Massets under any circumstances.

The young man interpreted for him very well indeed, although now and then he had to ask him to repeat some of his sentences, he was speaking so rapidly under the stress of mixed emotions he was experiencing as he told his story.

The captain and the others on board listened with lively interest, making remarks to one another from time to time in sympathetic tones that boded well for the result of Rae's appeal.

When he had finished his relation the captain and the young man conferred together a little while, during which Rae scanned their faces with feverish anxiety, and then the latter, extending his hand, said with great cordiality, —

“You are welcome here. We will take care of you, and we are glad to have the good fortune to come to your assistance in such good time.”

Rae wrung the proffered hand warmly, and drawing Freckles forward so that it might be clear he was speaking for both, said, —

“We thank you with all our hearts, and my father will reward you well for all your goodness.”

The young man laughed lightly.

“Oh, you need say nothing about rewards. We will

help you all we can, and when you do get back to your father you can tell him that the Russians are not bad people. And now, won't you come down into the cabin and eat some food?"

With great willingness the boys accepted the invitation, and soon a bountiful supper of salt meat, hard biscuits, and hot coffee was spread before them, that seemed after their many days' experience of savage fare the most delicious meal they had ever tasted in their lives.

How heartily they did fall to, and how pleased their hosts seemed to be at the keenness of their appetites!

"Ah, ha! you like that," said the young man, smiling; "you did get tired of what the Indians gave you — was it not so?"

"Indeed we did," responded Rae; "tired to death of it. And then you know we haven't had a plate or a knife or fork since we left the *Plover*, and it is so nice to have them again."

Hardly less delightful than the comfortable meal was the going to bed in civilized fashion once more. There happened to be a spare bunk in the after-cabin and another in the fore-cabin, and these were placed at the boys' service.

They were both very weary, the reaction from the excitement of the escape telling upon them no less than the exertion of the paddling, and it was with great sighs of content that they stretched out in their bunks for a good long sleep.

The next morning when they came on deck they were

almost out of sight of land, and in answer to Rae's question, the young man who spoke English informed him that they were on their way to Alaska.

In the course of a long conversation with him, Rae learned much about the schooner and those who manned her. The vessel belonged to the Russian American Company, which then held a monopoly of fur-hunting all over Alaska, and those on board were in the employ of the company. They had made a trip south in the hope of picking up some good pelts among the Indians of the Queen Charlotte Islands, and when they made so timely an appearance at Masset were intending to see if there were any skins to be found in that village. But as Rae in the course of conversation that night told them he had seen nothing of the kind, and they presumed the Indians would not be in very good humor for trade anyway, they had decided to put out to sea again, and return to Sitka, the time allowed for their trip having nearly expired at any rate.

"You will now come back with us," said the young man, whose name, as Rae had by this time learned, was Alexander Baranov, "and we will be good to you; and some day you will go back to your fort where your father is. That will make you glad, will it not?" and he smiled at the idea as if it gave him no small pleasure to suggest it.

"We will, indeed, be glad to stay with you until we can go home," said Rae cordially. "I am quite sure you will be good to us, and we'll try and be

good boys, and not give you any trouble—won't we, Freckles?"

Freckles promptly ducked his tousled head in token of assent, and the covenant was complete.

During the next few days, while the schooner was beating her way northward against opposing winds, Rae had a happy time. The comforts of civilized life—not merely having good food well served, but also the being able to wash and dress oneself properly, and to sleep in a cozy bunk—rejoiced his heart; and then, best of all, there was the assurance that now it would be only a question of time when he should get back to Fort Camosun. He might have to be patient for weeks, or even perhaps for months, until an opportunity should offer, but ultimately he would get back all right, and in the meantime he was among people who would treat him and Freckles kindly, and who were entirely civilized, even if they spoke a foreign tongue.

* * * * *

It is now necessary that the boys should be left on board the Russian schooner with all their discomfort and dangers at an end for the present, in order that the course of affairs at Fort Camosun may be taken up.

When the *Plover* returned to the fort without the boys, Mr. Finlayson's grief was so profound that for the space of a day he would have speech with nobody. The gloomy premonitions which had oppressed him before Rae left, but which he had dismissed as being based more upon his own selfishness than anything else, and as affording no

sufficient reason in themselves for denying his son what he so eagerly desired, now came back to haunt him.

“I should never have let him go,” he murmured to himself. “I dreaded lest ill should come of it, and now it has fallen out as I feared. Well,” he added, bracing himself up to bear the new burden of anxiety that had come upon him, “there’s no time to be lost in repining. I must go after him at once. God grant that he may be gently dealt with by the Indians. They shall have anything they ask as ransom if only they harm not one hair of my boy’s head.”

With the utmost speed preparations were made for a rescue expedition. The *Plover* was provisioned for many weeks, and instead of her usual cargo, was ballasted so as to sail her best, the only goods taken being a large assortment of things likely to prove most attractive to the Haidas, and to be readily accepted as ransom for their captives.

In addition to the regular crew of the schooner, Mr. Finlayson took on board with him twelve of his best men, all fully armed; and as a special means of coercion to be resorted to only at the last necessity, he had one of the small cannon removed from the bastion, and mounted in the bows. Having seen the sensational effect of this instrument of war when tried upon the Songhies, he felt sure it would stand him in equally good stead if required to be used against the Haidas.

The men comprising his party were hardly less eager than himself for the recovery of the boys. They all

loved Rae, and for his sake felt an interest in Freckles, and they were to a man ready to do or dare anything that might stand in the way of their success. There was not one left in the garrison who would not gladly have exchanged places with any of those who were accompanying Mr. Finlayson; and as the schooner moved away from the wharf, they sent hearty cheers after her to show their deep interest in her mission and their fervent desire that it might be successfully accomplished.

Tears filled the factor's eyes as he witnessed these proofs of his men's loyalty and love.

"They're grand good fellows," he said to himself. "They think far more of me than I deserve; but if we only find Rae safe and sound, they shall all have good reason to rejoice with me."

There was not much talked about on the voyage up but the chances of regaining the boys, and many were the suggestions made by the men as to what should be done in the event of this or that difficulty presenting itself. In their hearts they were all hoping that they would have an opportunity of giving the Indians a sound trouncing, provided of course their young captives did not suffer thereby.

They deemed it a most aggravating piece of presumption for them to attack the schooner and lay hands upon the boys, and considered that the cannonading of their village and the knocking of a score or so of them on the head would be only a well-merited penalty.

But Mr. Finlayson held different views. He was not

a man of blood under any circumstances ; and although, if it should turn out that Rae's life had been taken, he would assuredly inflict condign punishment upon his murderers, still, short of so lamentable a contingency, he would be guilty of no violence. And, moreover, it was his intention to exhaust every means of diplomacy before making any show of force. If he could regain his boy without shedding a drop of blood, he would be perfectly content.

The *Plover* had a prosperous voyage to Skidegate, reaching the inlet about noon of a fine bright day, when all nature at least seemed to be in a hopeful mood. Making in as close to the shore as the soundings permitted, the schooner came to anchor right in front of the village, whose inhabitants soon turned out in force to receive her.

"Now," said the factor, "let us be all ready to fight if needs be, but let us go as quietly as we can at the start."

The cannon having been charged and pointed towards the village, and every rifle and every musket carefully loaded, Mr. Finlayson, getting into the boat with two men only to row him, approached the beach, but did not land, standing in the bow of the boat and calling upon the natives to come forward and have a parley with him. He knew enough of their dialect to make himself understood, and was very urgent in his request.

At first there was a manifest hanging back on the part of the Haidas. Their consciences evidently

troubled them, and they no doubt feared treachery of some kind.

But as the factor persisted in his request, and added thereto assurances of no intention to harm any of them, and promises of presents, after a little several Indians came forward about half-way to the water's edge, and halting there, one of them—who was, in fact, old Hi-ling-a's successor in the chieftainship—plucked up courage to ask, —

“Who are you? What do you want?”

Too eager for information concerning his son to lose any time in beating about the bush, although that would have been the proper etiquette for the occasion, Mr. Finlayson spoke out at once, —

“I want to know where are those two white boys whom you kept behind when the big canoe” — indicating the *Plover* — “was here a little while ago.”

At the mention of the boys the Indian's face clouded. He hung his head and made no answer. The factor noticed this and it filled him with apprehension.

“Have the scoundrels done away with them?” he asked himself, shuddering at the thought. “He evidently understands me well enough, and is afraid or ashamed to answer.”

Repeating his question, and still getting no reply, Mr. Finlayson's anxiety could no longer be restrained.

“Row me ashore,” he commanded. “I must make him answer me. I can't stand this uncertainty.”

As soon as the boat moved in the chief retreated to

the main body of the people, and awaited the factor's approach in manifest perturbation.

Leaping out of the boat, Mr. Finlayson marched straight up to the crowd of natives, and, standing before the one who had been their spokesman, said in his most commanding tone, —

“Tell me at once about the white boys, and it will be well with you; but if you do not tell me I will command the thunder and lightning to smite you, and” — pointing to the row of houses with their tall totem poles — “I will break them in pieces so that you will have no houses to dwell in.”

The natives knew well enough that these were not mere empty words. They had sufficient knowledge of the terrible weapons of war used by the white people to credit all the factor's threats, and, disheartened as they were by the sore loss they had sustained through the disastrous failure of the war-party against the Massets, they had no desire to bring upon themselves further humiliation. Mr. Finlayson's words therefore disturbed them deeply, and they engaged in earnest consultation for some minutes, at the close of which an old grave-looking man, who was in fact their chief medicine-man, came forward a little, and stretching out his empty palms towards the factor, said in a tone of such profound sadness that it went far to carry conviction of the truth of his statements, —

“The white boys are not here. We have them not. The white chief may search in all our houses, but he will

not find them. Yet we did them no harm. Their blood is not upon our hands. If the white chief will listen he will be told all."

Mr. Finlayson having signified his willingness to listen patiently, the medicine-man entered into a full account of what had occurred, explaining that the boys had been held captive just in order that they might be taken on the war-party, and how they had set forth with the rest to attack the Masset village, and how the war-party had been utterly defeated, and of its whole number only three had survived, and after enduring awful hardships made their way back to Skidegate, where two had subsequently died.

As he was speaking there were murmurs of assent and nods of confirmation from those standing around, and, looking into their faces, Mr. Finlayson, who from long experience had come to be able to understand the Indians as well as any white man on the West Coast, felt forced upon him the harrowing conviction that he was hearing the truth.

When the medicine-man had finished his narration, he put a number of questions to him, but elicited nothing further of importance.

If Rae had not lost his life in the assault on the village, he must be a prisoner among the Massets, and there was nothing to do but follow him thither in the hope of finding him in their hands, and ransoming him.

With a heavy heart the factor turned away, having first spoken in burning words to the Indians, telling

them that his son's blood would be upon them if he was not found safe at Masset, for they had exposed him to the danger, and so if he was not recovered, he, Mr. Finlayson, would return, and destroy their village to teach them a lesson they might never forget.

This threat made them all look very solemn and frightened, and they followed the factor to the boat, entreating him to be merciful, for they did not mean any harm to his son. They had intended to take good care of him, and they had not expected that the war-party would be defeated, and so forth, and so forth.

Mr. Finlayson's replies were curt almost to gruffness. He did give the Indians credit for being free from murderous intent when they made captives of the two boys, yet, nevertheless, as a consequence of that indefensible proceeding, Rae was now either dead or in captivity with the Masset tribe, and who could say which?

As soon as the schooner was regained, orders were given to up anchor and get under way for the Masset village, Mr. Finlayson being determined to follow his son step by step until his fate was ascertained and the worst known.

Pursuing her way northward, the *Plover* circumnavigated Rose Point, and without delay or mishap reached Masset Inlet. Mr. Finlayson had never visited the place before, but one of his men had, and had acquired sufficient familiarity with the dialect to hold speech with the natives.

The latter, when they saw the *Plover* carefully picking

her way into their harbor, at once jumped to the conclusion that it was the same schooner as that in which Rae and Freckles had escaped, and the whole population of the village flocked to the shore to receive the boat, which, as before, contained only the factor and two oarsmen, one of whom was to act as interpreter.

Sing-ai came forward from the crowd, his handsome face beaming with good humor, for he had quite made up his mind that he was to hear about the white boys again, and perhaps be rewarded for his kindness he had certainly shown them during their brief stay at the village.

Mr. Finlayson deemed this genial reception a good omen, and bid his interpreter speak in as pleasant a tone as he could manage in view of his naturally gruff voice.

However surprised and disappointed as Mr. Finlayson may have been at the result of his inquiries after Rae among the Skidegate Indians, what he learned from those at Masset caused him even deeper distress.

Rae and Freckles had been here, and had been well treated by the chief and his people, although they had come in the company of their enemies on a hostile mission. But they were not there now. They had effected their escape one night when a big canoe just like that at present out in the water had suddenly appeared, and they had gone off to it in one of the small canoes, taking their thunder and lightning sticks, and all their belongings.

Poor Mr. Finlayson! Here was fresh mystery indeed, yet not without some rays of hope. A schooner just like the *Plover*! What could that mean? He knew of no

such vessel on the coast belonging to his company. It must either have come up from San Francisco or down from Sitka, and there was no telling which.

He questioned Sing-ai as closely as possible, but could elicit nothing that might help him to determine whence the schooner came.

Indeed if Sing-ai had had something to tell, it would have been hard to get it out of him, for he was so disappointed in finding that it was not the *Plover* which had been at Masset before, that he grew quite sulky, and Mr. Finlayson thought it well to propitiate him with presents ere the interview ended.

When he had satisfied himself that there was nothing more to be learned from the Massets, Mr. Finlayson returned to the schooner to talk over the matter with his men.

The news that his son had succeeded in getting back among civilized people comforted him greatly. It could now be only a question of time as to his getting back to Fort Camosun also. But in his fond impatience to have his boy with him again, the factor could not think of returning to the fort to there await Rae's return. He must follow in his track as fast as he could in the hope of catching up with him ere long.

He had a long consultation with his men upon the question as to whence the mysterious schooner most likely hailed. Was she a trading vessel from San Francisco picking up skins amongst the different Indian settlements, or was she one of the Russian sealing

schooners that had for some reason or other run into Masset?

Mr. Finlayson himself inclined to the latter theory, but the men, who perhaps were somewhat influenced by the desire to have a run down to San Francisco, were unanimous in support of the former, and the factor let them carry the day.

The *Plover's* course was therefore turned southward again, and thus father and son instead of drawing nearer were being separated further and further from each other every hour, the one going north, the other south, and their reunion more remote in the distance than ever.

* * * * *

And now to return to Rae. He was not long in getting to feel thoroughly at home on board the Russian schooner, although Alexander Baranov was the only member of the crew who could speak English fluently. The captain and some of the men could manage only a few words apiece, and by the aid of these and abundant gesticulations, Rae could hold intercourse with them after a fashion.

They all took kindly to him. His story was accepted as true in every particular, and he had the comfort of knowing that his position amongst them was unquestioned, and that in due time they would aid him in re-joining his father.

With his happy faculty, therefore, of taking things as they came and making the best of them, trusting in a kindly Providence to look after the future, he felt very

much at ease in his mind, and was ready to enter heartily into the new life that surrounded him, and fulfil his part in anything that might turn up.

To young Baranov he quickly became warmly attached. The Russian youth had much akin to himself in nature, being of a frank, fearless spirit, and having a warm heart. Like Rae, too, he took pleasure in leadership; and just as Rae enjoyed his relation to Freckles, so did Baranov his relation to Rae, which the latter had the good sense to accept just as unquestioningly as Freckles had done.

In making her way back to Sitka the Russian schooner did not go out into the Pacific, which would have been much the shorter course, but for safety's sake crossed Dixon entrance, and began to thread the mazes of the archipelago which fringed the mainland clear up to Cape Spencer.

The scenery was very much like that through which Rae had passed on the voyage from Fort Camosun to Fort Simpson, except that in many places it was wilder, and that the chances for shipwreck seemed even more plentiful than on the other course.

Baranov told him that they would make a call at Fort Wrangel on their way, and Rae, who had heard something about this important Russian post, was glad to know that he would have an opportunity of seeing it.

As the schooner worked her way through the devious straits and channels and passages which had to be traversed, Rae could not help admiring the skill in navigation shown by the Russians. They certainly knew how

to sail their sturdy craft to perfection, and loyal as he felt to Captain Hanson, he found himself compelled to admit that the captain of the Russian schooner had little to learn from him.

“Oh, wouldn’t it be fun to have a race between your schooner and ours!” said he to Baranov. “I’m sure I can’t say which is the best sailer, and it would be so exciting. And perhaps we may have it, too,” he went on, his face lighting up at the thought which had just occurred to him. “You know my father will be sure to follow me up as fast as he can, and he may guess what kind of a vessel I’ve escaped on, and come right up to Sitka after me. That’s quite possible, isn’t it, Alexander?” he concluded, looking into the Russian’s face with an appeal for assent in the probability of this happy consummation.

“Why, of course,” responded Baranov heartily; “nothing impossible about that. And if he does come up to Sitka, we’ll do our best to beat him at sailing, I promise you.”

If Rae had only known that while he was thus chatting, and making his heart light with hopes that were, after all, not too wild, his father, having allowed his men to persuade him against his own judgment, had already turned the *Plover’s* bow southward, and instead of drawing nearer Sitka was increasing the distance from it every hour, he would hardly have whistled so merrily to the breeze before which the schooner was bowling along at an inspiring rate of speed.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ATTACK ON THE KAKES.

THE Russian schooner reached Fort Wrangel "in good order and condition," as the bills of lading have it, one sunny afternoon, and Rae looked around with keen interest upon this famous post, where the Hudson Bay Company had often had exciting times with their northern rivals in the fur trade with the Indians.

For the company had established itself on the Stikline River not far from Fort Wrangel, and refused to admit exclusive right on the part of the Russians, the consequences being frequent collisions between the two interests, and more than one attempt on the part of the latter to burn down the English establishment.

But this was all over now. The company had withdrawn some time previous, and the Russians were in sole possession. They had a strong stockade-fort there, well garrisoned, and besides trading in furs with the natives were doing a little in the way of gold-mining, which had attracted a number of people, whose presence gave the place an air of bustle and importance that Rae found very entertaining.

In company with Baranov he went about "doing the town," and being much delighted at meeting some enterprising Englishmen who were trying their fortune at gold-mining, and with whom he could talk freely. One of them who had been many years roving up and down the coast, and knew his father, became much interested in him, and gave him a small nugget of gold as a keepsake, of which Rae was very proud.

It had been the intention that the schooner should stay at Fort Wrangel about a week before proceeding on to Sitka; but at the end of the second day, Baranov, who had been calling on the commander of the fort, came back to the vessel with a countenance whose expression of gravity betokened that he had heard something of no ordinary importance.

He at once sought out the captain and was closeted with him for some time, after which the two went up to the fort together talking earnestly.

Rae saw all this and it filled him with curiosity. "What was up now?" he asked himself. "Could the matter in any way concern him?"

He was not kept long in ignorance. As soon as Baranov returned, he came up to him and said, —

"What do you think we've got to do now? Instead of going straight on to Sitka, we're to take all the men the fort can spare over to Kupreanoff Island, to try and rescue some of our people those villanous Kakes have captured. They're the worst Indians on the whole coast, you know, and we're always having trouble with them. We're

pretty sure to have a fight, and if we do, somebody's bound to be killed."

"I've heard of those dreadful Kakes," said Rae. "They come down as far as Nisqually in their raids, and father once had a terrible fight with one of their war-parties."

"Well, we've got our hands full to give them a good licking this time," said Baranov, his countenance glowing at the prospect of a battle. "But you needn't come unless you want to, Rae. The schooner will have to come back to Fort Wrangel before going on to Sitka, and the commander will be glad of your company while we are away."

"No, indeed," returned Rae, most emphatically; "I'm going with you if you'll let me. I've a good rifle and pistols, and if you'll give me a little more powder and bullets, I want nothing else."

"Come along then," said Baranov, evidently well pleased at the boy's spirit. "Every rifle counts, you know, and it won't do to take too many men from the fort, for the Indians round about here are not to be trusted."

Baranov then went on to explain more fully the object of their expedition. It seemed that a small sealing schooner, on her way from Sitka to Fort Wrangel, had been cast away on Kupreanoff Island; and the Kake Indians, taking advantage of the helplessness of the crew, had killed half of them and made prisoners of the rest, at the same time plundering the vessel of everything they could carry off. The news of this outrage had been brought by friendly Indians, who vouched for the truth

of their story by showing some articles belonging to the schooner which they had obtained in barter from the Kakes. Having rewarded them handsomely for their information, the commander of the fort at once determined to attempt the rescue of the survivors of the catastrophe, and the timely presence of Baranov's vessel enabled him to press her into service for the purpose.

No time was lost in fitting out the expedition, and by noon of the next day the schooner got away, having on board besides her own crew twenty-five stalwart men, not all of whom belonged to the garrison; for the gold-miners, when they heard of what was contemplated, promptly volunteered their aid, and ten of their number were accepted.

In addition to the rifles, muskets, and pistols that abounded, two small cannon were mounted on the steamer's deck, and a number of rockets were also taken, as it was intended not merely to recover what was possible of the crew and cargo of the schooner, but also to inflict such punishment upon the Kakes that they would behave better in future.

Rae entered as heartily into the spirit of the affair as if among the captured crew there were some of his own friends. He had tasted the miseries of captivity himself, and his heart burned with sympathy for those who were now undergoing a similar experience.

The schooner's course lay past the north of Zarembo Island and through Keku Strait, in the upper reach of which the schooner had been wrecked. It was not difficult navigation, and such good progress was made that by

noon of the second day she began to near her destination ; and the plan of the commander of the expedition being to make a night attack on the offending village, of whose precise position he was not quite sure, he decided to come to anchor in a deep cove whose absolute solitude and safe anchorage exactly suited his purpose.

When the schooner had been securely moored, a consultation was held as to the best plan of campaign. All agreed that a land attack would be most effectual, and at the same time expose the party to the least danger. Expert and daring as they were in their canoes, like all the other Indians inhabiting the islands, the Kakes were as awkward as water-fowls on shore, and if the Russians could only creep up to the village under cover of darkness, they would hardly fail of an easy victory. The first thing to be done was to fix the location of the village, and the best means of approach.

The commander had taken the precaution to bring along with him a couple of Stikine Indians, who cherished a hereditary hatred for the Kakes, and could be relied upon to heartily co-operate in their undoing. They were good hunters, and well skilled in making their way through the forest.

He proposed that these Stikines should act as guides for a small party who should go in advance of the main body, and blaze the way as it were. On this being agreed to, Baranov at once said he would form one of the advance guard, and Rae immediately begged to be allowed to go along also.

The commander demurred at first, but Baranov won him over, and the party was made up as follows:—The two Indians, Baranov and Rae, and four of the men from the fort. The remainder of the little force, with the commander at their head, were to await a message from the leaders, and then follow as fast as possible.

The cautious advance through the forest reminded Rae of his similar adventure with Hi-ling-a's war-party, and he said to himself that he hoped the present one would have a happier issue than that had.

Although there was not much chance of encountering any of the Kakes, who were known to rarely venture far from the shore, still the utmost care was taken to move silently, and the keenest look-out was maintained for anything of the biped kind.

Plenty of four-legged creatures were met, and for such ardent sportsmen as Baranov and Rae it was a great temptation to take a shot at some of them. Indeed, so rich did the island seem to be in game, that Baranov made up his mind to have one day's hunting before returning to Fort Wrangel, provided, of course, the object of their mission were successfully accomplished.

The going was pretty difficult owing to the density of the undergrowth, but they made good progress notwithstanding, and, according to their calculation, ought soon to be drawing near to the village, when to their surprise they heard the sound of a human voice calling out in a language that the Indians recognized as being that of the island.

Instantly every one of the party crouched low to the ground, while with throbbing pulses they waited to see what was coming. The cry was repeated several times in such a way that it seemed clear the person uttering it was calling for his companions, either because he wanted them to come to him, or because he had lost his way and wanted to find them.

Now it was of the utmost importance that the Kake should be captured and silenced before any others appeared on the scene, and Baranov, who was a born strategist, promptly devised the best means to do it.

The six members of the scouting party were directed to spread out in a line within sight of each other, and to advance simultaneously in the direction whence the cries had come. They would thus be able to head off the Indian, and to close upon him even if he did take the alarm before they had him in their hands.

They could not understand why he still remained invisible, but they judged that he was not more than a hundred yards distant.

Moving as silently as catamounts, they crept forward foot by foot, each one hoping that he would be the first to sight the Kake, or better still to get his hands upon him.

In the disposition of the party Rae and Baranov had the centre of the line, the Indians being at the ends, and the thought that filled Rae's mind was:—

“Wouldn't it be fine for me to see him first! I'd just like to show the Russians what a Scotch boy is good for.”

The wonderful good fortune which had followed him hitherto, despite his enterprising spirit having so often led him to tempt Providence, once more stood in his stead. It chanced that an opening in the underbrush enabled him to get a little in advance of the others, and he was thus the first to come to the edge of a little glade in the centre of which, standing over one of the small red deer to be found on the island, that had no doubt just fallen a victim to his arrow, was a young Kake, whose calls for his comrades evidently meant that they might come and help him carry his quarry back to the village.

Rae's first impulse on seeing the Indian was to give a view-hallo that would hurry the others to the spot. But a second look at the tawny youth, still unconscious of his danger, determined him to venture upon his arrest single-handed.

Once he stepped out into the glade there was no further concealment of his approach, so, staking all upon the celerity of his action, he grasped his rifle tightly, dashed out of the forest at a pace worthy of an expert sprinter, and got within ten yards of the Kake before the latter, who had been standing with his back to him, heard the approaching footfalls, and turned to see what they meant.

At the sight of the white stranger rushing upon him with manifest hostile intent, the Indian uttered a wild shriek of terror and sprang away with frantic bounds like those of the deer he had just secured.

But, as has already been explained, the Kakes were far more at home on the water than on the land; and although

this poor frightened fellow was doing his best, the fleet-footed white boy made two yards to his one.

Yet should he succeed in reaching the forest first he might manage to effect his escape, and, realizing this, Rae dropped his rifle that there might be no check upon his speed.

In the meantime, Baranov and the others had come to the glade and were spectators of the exciting foot-race, while following after the contestants as rapidly as they were able.

The Kake, awkwardly as he ran, got over the ground so well that he had just reached the edge of the forest when, with an exultant shout of "Ah! ha! I've got you," Rae sprang upon his back and bore him to the ground.

In the excitement of the sighting of the Indian and of the chase he had not taken any thought as to whether he would find the savage an easy conquest. He had just obeyed the impulse of the moment without heed of consequences.

But when, having downed his quarry cleverly enough, the latter, instead of submitting passively, squirmed around like a weasel and clasped his assailant with a grip of steel, at the same time threatening his face with two rows of shining teeth that looked capable of giving a terrible bite, Rae suddenly realized that he had undertaken a more difficult task than he had supposed, and was fain to cry out lustily, "Help! help! Quick, or he'll get away from me."

The cry caused Baranov to increase his exertion, and

summoning all his speed he dashed up just in time to give the Kake a deft crack on the head with the butt of his pistol that put a sharp and sufficient quietus upon his struggles for freedom.

"That's good!" exclaimed Rae gratefully. "You were just in time. He has a fearful grip, and he was doing his best to get his teeth into me."

Rae might well speak of the savage's grip as fearful, for on his ribs were a number of bruises made by his finger nails; and had the wrestling continued much longer he would, beyond a doubt, have got considerably the worst of it.

Before the Kake recovered consciousness he was safely bound and gagged, and when he opened his eyes to find himself surrounded by a number of white people and two Indians, who had all a hostile appearance, such a pitiful look of abject terror came into his face that Rae's feelings were touched, and he felt half sorry for having been the instrument of his capture.

The Stikines were sufficiently versed in the Kake dialect to talk with the prisoner, and so Baranov told them what to say, and he was thoroughly examined.

At first he was disposed to be sulky and silent, but when Baranov, assuming his fiercest look, drew his hunting-knife, and made as though he would cut the fellow's throat, his perversity promptly vanished; and having been assured that if he ventured to cry out for help the knife would be plunged into him, the gag was removed from his mouth and the questioning began.

It took a little time to elicit just what was required of the unwilling informer, but by dint of patience and deft inquiry, it was learned that the Kake village stood about a mile away, that the Russian sailors were held there unharmed, and that there was going to be a big feast that night, the captive having been in quest of some venison for it when they came upon him.

All these bits of information were highly satisfactory, and the Russians exchanged congratulations at the fine prospect for success.

"That feast just suits our plans to perfection," said Baranov, rubbing his hands gleefully. "We'll come down upon them like an avalanche when they're in the very middle of it, and scatter them like sheep."

"Wouldn't it be better to wait until the feast is all over and they're tired out and sleepy?" suggested Rae.

"No, indeed," replied Baranov. "They might take it into their heads to torture our countrymen for an additional attraction when they get worked up. We must not let them have a chance to do that."

One of the Indians having been sent back to bring up the main body, the little advance party sat down to wait for them, taking advantage of the opportunity to refresh themselves with the contents of their wallets, which they had been so foresighted as to fill before setting forth.

"I hope the commander won't forget to bring some rockets along," said Baranov. "They'll be just the thing to let the Kakes know we'd arrived and had an account to settle with them."

Sure enough, when the commander appeared with the men, they had rockets all right, and the equipment of the expedition was complete.

Dusk was at hand by the time all had gathered. The commander was highly pleased at the capture of the Indian, and the information that had been extracted from him. He complimented Rae warmly upon his having run the savage down, which made the boy feel very proud of himself.

The Kake, having been made to understand that his own life depended upon his good behavior, and that he was expected to show the best way to the village, had the bonds removed from his feet, but not from his hands, and then was ordered to go ahead, one of the Stikines being on either side of him.

Moving in almost absolute silence, the Russians made their way toward the village. It soon became so dark that they could scarcely distinguish one another in the gloom, but by keeping close together and following implicitly the lead of the Indian, who seemed to see as well in the dark as in the daytime, their progress, if slow, was steady.

As they drew near their goal, the cries of the villagers, who had already begun the dance that preceded the feast, fell upon their ears, and presently the blaze of the big fire around which they were gathered shone through the trees with increasing brilliancy.

When they had got thus far, a careful reconnaissance was thought expedient, and so, while the others waited,

the commander, with Baranov and the two Indians, went ahead to get a clearer understanding of the situation.

The excitement had now become intense, and Rae showed it equally with the others, although he was after all not personally interested in the proceedings. He thought to himself, as with beating heart he awaited the return of the leaders, and the command to advance to the attack, how much he would have to tell his father when they were reunited; and with that, naturally enough, came the thought, how proud his father would be of his exploits.

These reflections were interrupted by a sudden movement on his right, and a sharp cry of alarm from one of the Russians. Then came the sound of one dashing recklessly through the underbrush, and by the aid of a flash of firelight Rae made out the Kake who had been taken prisoner flying toward the village with frantic speed.

The next moment a wild whoop of warning rang out above the babel of the dancers, and the commander, hurrying back to his men, exclaimed in a tone of vexation,—

“You blockheads, to let the rascal get away! He’s warned the whole village already.”

Not an instant was now to be lost. Pressing forward without any attention to orderly array, the Russians reached the edge of a slight bluff that overlooked the village, and the first glance told them their proximity was realized.

The dance had broken up in confusion, and the men were rushing this way and that after their weapons of

war, while the women, gathering together for mutual support, set up a wild wailing chorus that was perhaps an appeal to their deities to take them under their protection.

Pointing a rocket so that it would go just over their heads, the fuse was lit, and as the projectile, with an ear-splitting shriek and lightning-like brilliancy, tore through the air, the poor creatures, who had never seen anything of the kind before, fell forward on their faces in abject terror, then, picking themselves up, rushed away to their respective dwellings to hide from such appalling perils.

Down upon the village charged the Russians, uttering war-cries equal in fierceness of sound to anything the Indians could produce; and every man they met they promptly knocked over with the butts of their rifles, the commander having given strict injunctions that no more blood should be shed than was absolutely necessary.

At the outset it looked as if they were going to have an easy victory, but after the first moments of panic-stricken confusion the savages rallied, and, taking heart from the evident disparity of numbers, showed signs of standing their ground.

Not until then did the commander have recourse to bullets. The order to fire was given, and simultaneous with the volley two more rockets were set off, this time, however, being aimed right into the midst of the Indians.

The effect of the combined fire was dreadful. Full a score of Indians fell dead or wounded to the ground, and the others with wild cries of terror fled toward the canoes



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that were drawn up along the beach. The sea was their natural way of escape, and, forgetting everything else, they made for it, knowing that their assailants could not follow them there.

Among the fugitives was a stalwart young fellow whose richly adorned dress marked him out as being of superior rank, and Baranov, whose fighting spirit had been stirred to the depths, catching sight of him, determined to make him his prisoner.

He accordingly put on a tremendous spurt, and rapidly overhauled his man, who was a poor runner compared with him. The bright firelight showed Rae what his friend was about, and, thinking he might possibly be of some service to him, he likewise joined in the chase.

It was well for Baranov that he did, for the young Russian in the ardor of the pursuit tripped over a small boulder, and fell with such violence as to partially stun him.

At the moment he was within a couple of yards of the Indian, who, hearing the thud of his fall, glanced round, and seeing him prostrate, stopped suddenly in his flight.

In his right hand he had an ugly-looking spear, and this he raised with intent to transfix his prostrate pursuer, who saw the danger, but was powerless to avert it, when Rae, although still a dozen yards away, realizing that if he would save his friend he must act at once, drew his pistol, and fired what was little better than a snapshot.

Happily, however, it was good enough for its purpose.

The bullet struck the savage in the arm, shattering his elbow, and with a howl of mingled fright and fury he dropped the spear and continued his flight to the canoes, into one of which he jumped and paddled away before Baranov recovered from the shock of his fall sufficiently to follow him.

"You did that beautifully, my dear fellow," said the latter in tones of cordial gratitude. "I saw my danger, but I really couldn't move a limb. My tumble completely knocked the wind out of me. I'm sure I can't tell you how much I'm obliged to you."

"Turn about is fair play," laughed Rae. "You helped me with that fellow who wanted to bite my head off, and now I've just returned the favor, that's all."

"Yes, but you got your man, and I didn't," responded the Russian with an exaggeration of disappointment; "and he was such a fine-looking fellow too. I wanted to take him up to Sitka as a trophy. But come now and let us see if we can find the men we came to rescue; I've seen nothing of them yet."

The fighting was all over by this time, and only the dead and wounded lying upon the ground remained in sight of the entire population of the village, those who had not escaped in the canoes having hidden in the woods at the far end of the line of dwellings.

The sight of the dead, now that the hand-to-hand struggle had subsided, gave Rae a feeling of nausea, and he got as far away from them as possible while search was being made for the Russian captives.

Before long triumphant shouts announced their discovery. They had been confined as close prisoners in the chief's dwelling, and were brought out with great rejoicing, seeming none the worse for their captivity. Not only were they found, but also a large quantity of the belongings of the schooner, and a fine lot of furs that would go far towards recompensing the pursuers for their trouble.

The commander could not think of neglecting these, and as it would be very difficult to transport them back to the schooner through the dense woods, it was, after consultation, decided that, while a party of four went back to bring the schooner around the point to the village, the rest should remain in possession until the vessel arrived.

Of course this could not be done until daylight; but the night was already more than half gone, and there was no chance of attack from any quarter, so that the wearied warriors were free to take a much-needed rest.

In due time the schooner appeared, and as rapidly as possible everything that had belonged to the wrecked vessel, and also everything else in the village that seemed worth taking, were got on board; which work being completed without interruption, the schooner sailed away, having taught the Kakes a lesson they could hardly fail to remember for many a long day.

Rae was very glad when it was all over. Slaughter and pillage were not at all to his taste, and richly, no doubt, as the Indians deserved their punishment, he felt some regret at having had a share in its infliction. They were only poor ignorant creatures after all, and they had

been made to suffer terribly for their wrong-doing. He said something of this to Baranov, but the Russian had no sympathy with such notions. The Indians were, in his opinion, no more to be considered than so many wild animals, and if they had the presumption to provoke the white man's wrath they could not be made to pay too heavily for their folly.

There was great rejoicing on the return of the schooner to Fort Wrangel with the rescued sailors and the recovered property, and nothing would do the commander but to have a big feast to celebrate the event, at which the presence of those on board the schooner was absolutely indispensable.

The captain of the vessel would have preferred pushing on to Sitka without further delay, but not so Alexander Baranov; a feast was entirely to his mind, and he was so determined upon remaining that he carried his point.

Rae was very glad to stay. There would be sure to be some fun, and what boy does not know how to appreciate a big dinner! He had got to feel altogether at home among the Russians, who were kindly albeit somewhat rough in their manners, and treated himself and Freckles as well as they could wish.

Freckles felt so content at being out of the hands of the savages that it was all one to him whether they stayed at Fort Wrangel or went on to Sitka. He had three good meals every day, a comfortable bunk at night, and nobody to order him around except Rae, whom he found unfailing delight in obeying, for he loved him with the whole strength of his nature.

The day of the jubilation was made a holiday, and wholly given up to enjoyment. There were canoe races and foot races, wrestling matches and target shooting, and similar amusements during the morning and afternoon, all of which Rae and Freckles enjoyed heartily, although sometimes the competitors got so fiercely in earnest that breaches of the peace seemed imminent.

But the presence of the commander, who acted as referee in all the contests, and maintained a most laudable judicial dignity despite the excitement around him, exercised a wholesome restraint, and although there was considerable wrangling no actual collision occurred.

Late in the afternoon Baranov, who, like Rae, had not taken part in any of the contests, got fired with the notion of trying his speed against Rae, and accordingly challenged him to a contest.

Rae would rather not have run. He felt pretty sure of being able to outstrip the Russian, and he was not at all ambitious to do so.

But Baranov urged so strongly that he at length consented, and they prepared for the trial. By this time the other people had about tired themselves out, and the news of the race between the two youths having spread, they all gathered round to witness it.

The course agreed upon was along the edge of the beach to a boulder about a quarter of a mile distant and back again.

Having doffed all superfluous clothing, Rae and Baranov toed the mark and awaited the signal to start.

CHAPTER XVIII.

EXCITING TIMES AT FORT WRANGEL.

THE report of a pistol held by the commander sent the runners off side by side for the first few yards, and then Baranov drew ahead. He was excessively anxious to win the race, and his impetuous nature made him exert himself to the utmost at the outset, just as though the distance to be covered had been a hundred yards instead of half-a-mile.

Rae, on the other hand, was not only less eager for victory, but had sufficient command of himself to recognize the fact that he was not capable of running so far at sprinting speed, and he therefore kept himself well in hand, in spite of the exultant glances that Baranov cast back at him over his shoulder.

All the cheers were, of course, for the Russian, but Rae did not mind that. Had they been running at Fort Camosun instead of Fort Wrangel it would have been the other way, so he just kept on resolutely; while Baranov increased his lead, until at the turning-point he was full fifty yards ahead, and as he passed Rae on his way back panted out triumphantly, —

“Good-bye; I’ll see you again later on.”

But he had better have kept his crowing until the race was over and the issue beyond doubt. Once around the turn, Rae let himself out, and having plenty of reserve wind overhauled his opponent at a rate that made the latter’s friends look anxious.

Every stride told in his favor. Baranov, blown and fagged from his foolish spurt at the start, perceptibly lost speed, although he struggled fiercely to maintain his pace, and Rae drew up to him yard after yard until they were again side by side.

Now at the beginning of the race Rae had it pretty well settled in his mind to let Baranov win whether he should prove the fastest runner or not. But on the way the latter’s taunting looks and words, and the one-sided cheering of the spectators, together with the excitement of the struggle, had worked a change in his mood, and he felt stirred up to win now that he saw victory easily within his grasp.

“I’ll show them who’s the best runner!” he muttered.

“They think too much of themselves altogether.”

Keeping on, therefore, with his steady stride he slipped past Baranov, who made a frantic but futile effort to hold him, and when about a hundred yards from the goal had a clear lead of full ten yards.

The race was his. Already the cheers for his opponent had died away into a disappointed murmur, and the few who had, more for the sake of sport than with any expectation of winning, wagered their roubles upon Rae

began to look joyful and to wish they had doubled their wager, when Rae happened to look over his shoulder and caught a glance of the Russian's face.

That glance made him suddenly change his mind; for on Baranov's features he beheld such a mingling of despair and rage and dejection that it went straight to his heart.

"I mustn't beat him," he muttered; "it will break his heart. He's crazy to win."

It was not, therefore, from any fear of ill consequences to himself, but from sincere pity for his competitor, to whom victory meant far more than it did to him, that Rae began to falter in his stride.

Had his wind of a sudden given out? Were his legs failing beneath him? The spectators did not know, but the quick resumption of their encouraging cheers showed that hope for their favorite had revived.

Baranov was not slow to read the sign aright, and it spurred him up to one more supreme effort. Almost reeling in his tracks, he forced himself forward. Now he was within a stride of Rae; now they were shoulder to shoulder; another moment and he was ahead; and just as they crossed the line he staggered in a winner by one yard, and fell utterly exhausted into the arms of the commander outstretched to receive him, while his countrymen made the welkin ring with shouts of triumph, being so excited over the result that not one of them had the thoughtfulness to say something consolatory to the vanquished.

But Freckles did not forget, and his hesitating words

were all the comfort Rae needed, for they spared him the necessity of explanation.

“You could have beaten him all right, couldn’t you, Rae?” said the affectionate fellow, whose keen eyes of love had not failed to read the situation aright. “You let him beat you, didn’t you?”

“Hush!” replied Rae, putting his hand over his companion’s mouth; “they’ll hear you. You’re right,” he added in a whisper; “I could have beaten him, but I didn’t want to.”

Freckles beamed, but said no more. Such a defeat was better than a victory; and so long as Rae and he understood each other, he was quite willing to let the Russians rejoice to their heart’s content.

As soon as Baranov recovered his breath he came up to Rae with outstretched hand. All the gloom had gone from his face, and he was radiant.

“You gave me a hard time of it,” he panted. “I thought you’d beaten me, and indeed but for my last spurt you would have done it handsomely. You’re a fine runner, Rae.”

Rae smiled amiably, and shook the proffered hand warmly. He had felt some slight apprehension lest Baranov might suspect the race had been given him, but they were evidently groundless. The Russian had no doubt as to his success being entirely due to his superiority, and in that comfortable conviction he would never be disturbed.

Not only he, but the commander and all the others,

had been put in the best of humor by the result of the contest, even those who had lost a few roubles finding adequate consolation in the victory of their countryman. When the crowd had quite finished congratulating the victor they gathered about Rae, and smiled upon him with such manifest good feeling that he realized his self-denial had been no less a stroke of diplomacy than a wholesome impulse of kindness.

Undoubtedly he stood in better favor with the Russians than ever, and that was a prize worth winning in itself.

Soon after sundown the feast began in the big dining-hall of the fort, which had been decorated for the occasion with flags, and flowers, and ferns, and highly burnished weapons of war, both civilized and savage, until it really looked almost fit for any company.

Rae thought it magnificent. He had never seen anything so fine before; and when upon the table he found snow-white linen as soft as silk, and flashing glass, and gleaming silver, and glittering steel, the like of which were hitherto unknown to him, his eyes opened wide with wondering admiration, and turning to Baranov, who had placed him at the commander's left and taken a seat beside him, he said in his frank, hearty way, —

“This beats anything I've ever seen. How splendid it all is! You must be very rich at the fort.”

“Pooh!” laughed Baranov, well pleased at the boy's sincere admiration. “It's pretty fair, but it's nothing to what they can do at Sitka. I'll show you something much finer up there.”

“This is quite fine enough for me,” responded Rae, settling himself down in his chair to the full enjoyment of the honors of the occasion.

Not less luxurious and elaborate than the table appointments was the bill of fare provided. The cooks of the establishment had been enjoined to out-do themselves, and they had spared neither materials, skill, nor trouble in obeying the command.

Besides some things that were quite new to Rae, and which he found not at all to his taste — such as caviare, salted salmon roe, smoked breast of wild goose, and other characteristic Russian relishes — there were plenty of viands that he could heartily enjoy: rich soups whose very odor was enough to give one an appetite had that been wanting, huge salmon boiled whole and smothered in creamy sauces, great haunches of venison done to a turn, braces of roast duck brown and juicy, and so forth in apparently endless profusion.

As the boy watched their lordly dishes being borne in one after the other, and set in bewildering array before him, he found himself regretting keenly that his capacity for the enjoyment of them was so limited.

Baranov bethought himself of this also; for seeing with what vigor Rae attacked the soup and the fish, he ventured to warn him against filling up too soon when there was so much yet to follow.

The Russian was a more experienced diner-out, and understood the importance of observing a due proportion, and thus being able to range over the whole bill of fare.

Rae laughed good-humoredly at the hint. "I don't wonder you think I'm a bit greedy," he said. "But I tell you I've not had anything so good to eat for months, and it just seems as if I couldn't get enough of it."

Not only were there delicious viands in abundance, but tempting wines also, brought over from Russia at great expense, and indulged in only on rare occasions.

These likewise were new to Rae, and at his friend's pressing request he tasted the vodka, which is the Russian national drink, but found it so raw and fiery that, forgetting his good manners for the moment, instead of swallowing the mouthful he had taken, he spat it out on the floor, exclaiming energetically, —

"Ugh! it burns the skin off my tongue! What awful stuff! How can you drink it?"

Both Baranov and the commander laughed heartily at his disgust. It was just what they had expected.

"Ah, my boy," said the former, in an amused tone, "that's too strong for you, eh? You'll have to get used to it little by little. See how good I think it," and putting his glass to his mouth, he drank off its contents, smacking his lips with great gusto.

Rae shook his head very decidedly. He had no idea of learning to like such fiery stuff. It might do for the Russians, but it wouldn't do for him.

"Well, then, try some champagne," said Baranov; "that won't burn your tongue. You'll like it, I'm sure."

When his glass was filled, Rae regarded it for a minute

dubiously. He had an instinctive dislike to strong drink of any kind, and had already at Fort Vancouver seen and heard something of its perils, but he had never come to any conclusion about it as regards himself beyond registering a vow one day, when he saw one of the men in a state of beastly intoxication, that he would never be such a fool.

But the champagne foamed and bubbled so brightly, and the fumes of it were so enticing, that he could not resist the temptation to take one sip; and thus finding the wine as delicious to the taste as it was beautiful to the eye, he kept on sipping until he finished his glass.

Hardly had he done so, however, than he began to have a queer feeling in his head. A kind of mist came over his eyes, and he found his head growing heavy as though he needed to lie down and sleep.

At once it flashed across him that this was the effect of the champagne, and he felt angry with himself for having taken it. He dreaded lest Baranov should notice how he was feeling, and did his best to conceal it, until at last the situation was too uncomfortable to be borne, and, whispering to him that he would be back in a minute, he got up from his chair and slipped quietly out of the room.

The change from the hot, fume-laden atmosphere of the dining-hall to the cool air outside was very refreshing, yet with some concern Rae noticed that there was a tendency to unsteadiness in his gait; and being resolved to lose no time in gaining complete command of

himself, he hastened down to the beach, threw off his clothes, and took a dip in the cold sea-water that effectually dispelled the influence of the wine and thoroughly restored his equilibrium.

Then dressing again in a leisurely fashion, he made his way back to the dinner and resumed his seat, feeling as fresh and as bright as he had done at the beginning of the feast.

He was not long there before he observed that Baranov was acting in a way that showed a plunge in the brine would be a good thing for him also. The young Russian had been imbibing pretty freely, alternating vodka with champagne, and taking too much of each.

Now he would break out into a snatch of a song, and again he would throw some taunting jest across the table, frequently breaking out into noisy laughter apropos of nothing in particular.

Soon after Rae had seated himself he turned his attention upon him, and throwing his arm around his neck with effusive demonstrations, hiccupped out, —

“You’re a fine runner for a Britisher, but I can beat you every time. I can give you lessons in running any day. That’s so, isn’t it? Eh? you can’t deny it?” and he peered eagerly into Rae’s face.

Now it had been hard enough for the “Britisher” to allow his opponent to win that race simply because his heart was too tender to inflict a defeat that would have been felt so keenly, and to have his magnanimity turned against him in this fashion tried his self-control

sorely. Had the champagne still been in his head, he would probably have made some injudicious reply, that might have led on to a heated discussion.

But, thanks to the timely outing, he was able to keep command over himself sufficiently to preserve silence in the face of Baranov's taunts.

With this, however, the young man would not be content. He must needs have Rae acknowledge his inferiority in so many words; and he repeated his boasts in a voice of ascending strength, until he was heard all over the room, and the rest of the party turned to see what was the matter.

Still Rae resolutely kept silence. He did not want to flatly contradict Baranov, and yet he was not going to stultify himself by assenting to what he well knew to be untrue and unjust to his own powers. He felt sure he could outrun the Russian at any distance, and he was not to be intimidated into declaring the contrary.

As Baranov became increasingly aggressive, Rae moved away from him, saying persuasively, —

“Oh, never mind, Baranov; you beat me right enough that time, and I'm quite satisfied.”

But still Baranov was not satisfied. He must have nothing less than the open admission that he could beat him at any time; and staggering up from his seat he laid hold of Rae, who had by this time also risen, and began to shake him as though he would shake the withheld words out of him.

Rae's patience had endured wonderfully, when his natural quickness of temper was borne in mind, but the rudeness of the Russian put quite too severe a strain upon it.

"Come now, Baranov," said he sharply, "you needn't do that. I've said all that I'm going to say, and that's an end of it," and with this he threw off the other's hands, and made as though he would leave the room.

Both the tone of voice and the action angered Baranov still more, and crying out, "No, sir, you don't leave this room until you've said what I want you to say," he lurched forward, and laid hands upon Rae again, this time with a much firmer grip.

Thoroughly roused, Rae strove to free himself, and the two swayed to and fro for the space of a minute, amid the applauding exclamations of the other guests, who all thought it a good bit of fun, except Freckles, who, having his wits about him better than they had, saw well enough that there was less fun than earnest in the thing.

Under ordinary circumstances Rae would have been no match for Baranov at wrestling. He was younger, shorter, and slighter, but the Russian's partial intoxication prevented him making the best of his advantages, and equalized matters, so that Rae was able to hold his own against him long enough to give him hopes of getting the best of the wrestle.

Up to this point Baranov had been playing a fair enough game, but the fear lest Rae should prove too much for him aroused the devil in his spirit, and losing

all care for consequences, he gave his unwilling antagonist a brutal kick on the ankle, at the same time putting forth a supreme effort to force him backward.

The cruel, cowardly trick succeeded only too well. Taken completely by surprise, for he expected no such treachery, Rae lost his foothold, and was thrown backward, his forehead coming into violent contact with the edge of a heavy chair, so as to inflict a serious wound near the right temple, and to render him unconscious.

At the sight of his bleeding face, Freckles, all thought of self or fear of men banished by passionate anxiety for the friend he loved, sprang forward to raise him up, crying out wildly, —

“Oh! you’ve killed him, you brute! You’ve killed Rae, and it’s all your fault.”

Startled into comparative sobriety by the sight before him, Baranov, resenting not Freckles’s excited words, bent forward to aid him in lifting the motionless form, but in so doing lost his balance and toppled over beside him. Indeed he would have fallen across him but for a fierce push from Freckles that warded him off.

By this time the commander thought he had better interpose, and with his assistance Rae was carried into one of the bed-rooms and placed upon a bed, where the blood was tenderly washed from his face by Freckles, who would allow no one else to touch him.

It was several minutes before Rae recovered consciousness. The blow was a bad one, and would be a cause of suffering for several days to come. Fort Wrangel did

not boast a doctor, but the commander had a medicine chest, the contents of which he knew how to use, and he promptly came to the rescue with this, putting a plaster on, and binding up the wound with a degree of skill that was decidedly to his credit.

The remainder of the night Freckles never left Rae's side, nor closed his eyes, but was ever watchful to anticipate and supply his slightest want, fanning his fevered face, changing his pillows, bringing fresh cool water, and in fact filling the part of a nurse with an affectionate thoroughness that left nothing undone.

And for this service he asked no better reward than when, as the dawn stole into the room, poor Rae, who had been groaning with pain, paused for a moment to take his hand, and to murmur softly, "How good you are, Freckles. You are making me feel better already."

Early in the morning Baranov made his appearance, looking the very picture of shame and contrition. It was not until sleep had restored him the command of his faculties that he realized what he had done, and he was most sincerely sorry for it.

"I was a drunken fool last night, Rae," said he, with frank self-condemnation, "and deserve a taste of the knout for my conduct; and if you like," he added quite seriously, "you can give it to me too when you're all right again. But I'm really so sorry, and I hope you'll forgive me. You'll never have reason to find fault with me again, I promise you."

There was no mistaking the sincerity of Rae's forgive-

ness. Taking Baranov's extended hand he clasped it warmly in his, saying heartily, "That's all right, Baranov; I don't bear you the least bit of a grudge. You didn't mean to hurt me like this, I know, and we'll just try and forget about it."

Baranov looked as if he might cry, so deeply was he moved by Rae's magnanimity, but by a mighty effort he restrained himself, and said in a broken voice, —

"You're a good fellow, Rae, and I won't forget this, even if you do. You'll see if I don't try and make it up to you some way."

Some days elapsed before Rae was thoroughly himself again, and in the meantime the schooner had been got ready for the voyage to Sitka, and only waited for him to start.

Pleasant as the stay at Fort Wrangel had proved, barring of course the dinner incident, Rae was very glad to bid the place farewell. Without being able to explain to himself just why, he cherished a hope almost amounting to a conviction that at Sitka he would hear news of his father, if not indeed be reunited to him. He was therefore impatient to reach the place, and at least satisfy himself on this point if he accomplished nothing else.

Baranov showed the sincerity of his contrition by insisting upon Rae having the most comfortable berth in the cabin, and the seat on the captain's right hand at the table. Not only so, but he would have lavished gifts upon him had Rae consented to receive them; and as it was, he was fain to accept a splendid dagger in a richly

chased silver sheath, and a superb seal-skin coat, trimmed with sea-otter, fit for the back of a prince.

"You must at least take these," urged Baranov, "or I won't be able to feel sure that you've really forgiven me."

And so Rae yielded, assuring the donor that he would always keep them in pleasant remembrance of him.

In order to reach Sitka the schooner, rather than attempt the outside passage, which would have been much shorter, went up through Wrangel Narrows past Kupreanoff Island, whereon dwelt the Kakes who had been taught the danger of meddling with Russian sailors, across the broad Frederick Sound, and up still broader Chatham Strait, where the shores on either side were hardly visible, into Peril Strait, which bordered the north of the island on which Sitka stood, and then down past Kruzoff Island and many others to Sitka itself.

It was a pleasant and prosperous voyage, with the exception of the passage of Peril Strait, where the schooner had a tussle that forcibly reminded Rae of the thrilling struggle the game little *Plover* had with the dreaded Yaculta whirlpool in the Seymour Narrows.

Peril Strait, rightly called by the Tingets Koo-latchika, or "dangerous channel," had at its two narrowest parts tidal rapids, that required to be encountered at slack water between tides in order to be easily managed.

The schooner got to the first rapid in good time, and passed through with such little difficulty that the captain was not so careful as he ought to have been at the second.

Moreover, he was anxious to get through before night-fall, and so, although the tide had turned, and was already running out when he reached the second or southern rapid, he determined to make the venture.

No sooner had the schooner got into the full power of the current, however, than he regretted his rashness ; but it was too late to withdraw.

At its narrowest part the channel was barely one hundreds yards in width, and strewn with sunken rocks, over which the tide rushed, roaring, at the rate of ten knots an hour. The sails of course counted for nothing under these circumstances, and flapped uselessly at the masts, as the vessel, borne along swiftly by a power mighty enough to master a colossal iron-clad, tossed upon the boiling waves like a bit of wood.

The perilousness of their situation soon became manifest to all on board, and there being nothing to do but to await the issue, they gathered amidships, now watching the captain at the wheel with looks of deep concern, and now glancing anxiously ahead at the dangers that threatened so thickly.

The captain, concealing his regret for having attempted the passage then, stood at the stern as calmly as though they were in the open sea, keeping a keen look-out forward, and spinning the wheel around this way or that, according to the need of the moment.

With startling speed the schooner was swept on for mile after mile, now passing a menacing rock so closely that even the captain trembled for the moment, and now

dancing gaily in the middle of the flood, with plenty of room on either side.

There were no less than eight miles of this harrowing navigation ; and although the actual time taken was less than an hour, it seemed to Rae as if it would never be over.

At length the channel began to widen, and the spirits of those on board the schooner to rise. They could already see smoother water not far ahead; and Rae, who had been in the bow, coming back to the stern where Baranov stood near the captain, had just said in a relieved tone, "We'll soon be through. See, that's where the rapids end," pointing to where there was no more foam and the water seemed comparatively at rest, when, with a shock that sent a shudder through every one on board, the schooner struck one of the sunken rocks, and hung quivering upon it, while the wild waters foamed fiercely about her.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE HOME OF THE FUR SEAL.

THE shock of the schooner striking threw many of those on board her off their feet, including Rae and Baranov, but they were all up again at once, looking this way and that with anxious excited faces.

Was the vessel stuck fast, or would she free herself? and if she did, was she so severely injured as to be unseaworthy? These were the questions the men asked one another, but no one could answer.

Rocking and trembling in the turbulent current, the schooner kept her place for perhaps the space of three minutes, and then with a wrench, caused by the stern swinging round, tore herself free, and resumed her onward course amid the glad shouts of her crew.

Down into the hold went a couple of the men, and their report was awaited with keen anxiety. Presently they came back announcing that the vessel was making very little water, and had not apparently suffered much damage. As a matter of fact, thanks to the honest solidity of her build, she had only lost her forefoot, and beyond the slight straining apart of her lowest seam, was none the worse for her bumping on the rocks.

Thenceforward the rapids presented no further difficulty, and the captain succeeded, ere darkness fell, in finding a snug little cove wherein to anchor for the night, as he did not care to run the risk of making his way without the aid of full daylight in those dangerous waters.

After escaping from Peril Strait there was a maze of islands that sprinkled the strait between Kruzoff Island and Sitka to be cautiously threaded, and then at last, just before sunset, the capital of the then Russian Province of Alaska was reached, and the loud report of the nine-pounder carried in the bow announced the successful termination of the voyage.

The first thing that caught Rae's attention was the great castle built upon the rocky eminence that commanded the town and harbor, and which seemed to Rae, although it was only a wooden structure, imposing as it certainly appeared, a magnificent monument of human power.

"Why, what is that?" he asked, breathless with admiration as its lofty walls of mighty logs and towering bastions bristling with cannon came fully into view. "Is that your fort?"

Baranov's nostrils expanded with pride, and he drew himself up to his full height as he replied, —

"My grandfather built that. It was his castle. He conquered this country for Russia, and he was commander here for many years."

The young Russian spoke truly. Although he had

made no boast of it hitherto, he was the grandson of the famous Alexander Baranov who, in the beginning of the century, had by his reckless daring and tremendous energy taught the Koloshian Indians to respect Russian rule, and had lived amongst them in princely state, exercising an almost supreme authority over Europeans and Indians alike.

In spite of the memory of many wild doings attached to his name, the grandson had good reason to be proud of it; and having kept silence hitherto on this point, he now indulged himself in a glowing account of the deeds of his ancestor that found in Rae and Freckles as sympathetic and delighted an audience as he could possibly wish.

The elder Baranov had evidently been a hero after Rae's own heart, for though small in stature, he was possessed of unusual muscular strength and physical endurance. He was absolutely fearless, and never allowed any obstacle, no matter how serious, to turn him aside from his chosen purpose.

The Koloshian Indians having during his absence destroyed a strong post that he had established to the northward of Sitka, he, on his return, gathered together all his forces, which comprised some two score Russians and three hundred Aleutian sea-otter hunters, and in three small sloops set out to attack Sitka, then the Indian stronghold, nothing daunted by the fact that he had to reckon with a body of not less than five thousand savages, fierce and flushed with their recent success, and ready for fresh blood and rapine.

He found his foes intrenched behind a huge stockade thrown up on the same lofty height where he subsequently built his own castle, from the apparent security of which they reviled him and taunted him with his recent misfortunes. But they soon were made to eat their own words.

The cannon on board the sloop splintered the stockade, and led by Baranov, whose immunity from hurt seemed to make him bear a charmed life, the Russians and Aleuts charged dauntlessly again and again until the defenders of the citadel fled in dismay, and the victory was complete.

As Rae looked admiringly about him he felt that it was a victory well worth winning. Sitka was now in the height of its glory under the Russians, and when in company with Baranov he went ashore and "did the lions" of the place, he felt disposed to thank Providence for having brought him thither even by so devious and strange a course.

The houses of Sitka were of a size and style far surpassing any he had ever seen before. For the sake of self-protection and comfort the Russians, instead of living in separate dwellings, had built large apartment houses or flats, some of which were not less than one hundred and fifty feet in length by eighty in depth, and three stories high, with huge attic roofs. They were constructed of big spruce logs, snugly dove-tailed at the corners, and the roofs were covered with sheet-iron. The walls were painted a faint lemon color, and the iron roofs glowed with red

ochre. The windows were small, but fitted neatly with tasteful casements, and had double sashes.

Within, the floors were laid of planks tongued and grooved by hand and highly polished, the inner walls were "ceiled up" on all sides and papered showily, and the heavy Russian furniture stood upon rugs of wool and fur that gave a delightfully rich effect to the rooms, wherein, let the outside weather be as boisterous and bitter as it might, the occupants could lead lives of entire physical comfort.

All this was very new to Rae, and so also was the lavishly decorated church where the Greek Catholic Bishop of Alaska, aided by a large staff of priests and deacons, conducted service with a degree of ecclesiastical pomp and splendor strangely contrasted to the savage wilderness that formed his bishopric; and then there was the shipyard, as complete as any similar establishment in the Russian empire; and the brickyard, and the wood-turning shop, and the woollen mills, and the iron foundry, where bells for the mission chapels were cast, and ploughshares and other agricultural implements.

It seemed to Rae, as he accompanied Baranov from one establishment to another, that there was no end to the marvels of Sitka, and again and again he exclaimed in his own hearty way, —

"How glad I am that you brought me here ! I've read about places like this, and father has told me something about them, but now I am seeing them for myself, and it is just splendid."

But it was when they went up to the castle, then in its halcyon days of splendor, that the highest point of his enthusiasm was reached. Here indeed was a fort that realized his ideal. Built upon the solid rock, with precipices all round, and commanding an unbroken sweep of sea and land ; constructed so strongly that its battlements endure to this day in spite of the ravages of decay and vandal hands ; defended by rows of shining brass cannon, and garrisoned by scores of stalwart men, it wanted nothing in his eyes, and almost unconsciously he murmured, —

“I wish Fort Camosun were like this. Why can’t we have things as fine as the Russians?”

If Rae enjoyed seeing all these things, Baranov found hardly less enjoyment in showing them. He was full of pride and pleasure on more than one account. There were his family connection with the place, his patriotic interest in it, and his delight in hearing that it so far surpassed any of the establishments of the great Hudson’s Bay Company on the western coast. He never appeared to more advantage than in doing the honors of the place, and Rae felt himself to be greatly favored of fortune in having such a cicerone.

The following evening after their arrival Baranov and Rae, together with the captain of the schooner, were invited to dinner at the castle. Rae’s own clothes were altogether too weather-worn to be suitable for such an occasion, so he was fain to accept his friend’s urgent offer of an outfit from his own ample wardrobe. They were

of course a little large, but in every other respect they met the boy's need, and he felt quite at ease on that point when they presented themselves before the governor, where their reception was exceedingly cordial, and Rae soon lost all uncomfortable sense of strangeness.

Splendid as the banquet at Fort Wrangel had seemed to Rae, this one as far surpassed it as that had done the best of which Fort Camosun was capable. Magnificent gold and silver plate, glittering cut glass, precious china, and sumptuous damask adorned the table, and the viands were well worthy of the elegance with which they were served.

Mindful of his experience at Fort Wrangel, Rae confined himself rigidly to cold water and coffee, and Baranov, while he did not let the champagne go by him untouched, took care that only a moderate quantity passed his lips. There was plenty of speech, song, and story after the cloth was removed, and although Rae could understand but little of it, still the atmosphere of good fellowship was sufficiently enjoyable in itself.

Not only the governor but many of his subordinates could speak the English language freely, and Rae found it easy to maintain conversation with them, so that in this respect he was much better off than he had been at the Fort Wrangel banquet.

Altogether he had what he considered a right royal time, the only cloud upon his enjoyment of it being the regret that his father was not sharing it with him.

As he looked along the row of faces that lined the

table, he saw some that were certainly very handsome, but there were none that in his opinion could outshine his father, and he pictured to himself how the stalwart factor of Fort Camosun would hold his own among these men, who were as a rule of a much shorter, heavier build and less refined cast of countenance.

It was during the dinner that Baranov learned of some vessels being about to start for the islands upon which the famous fur seals were hunted, and the moment he heard of it he determined to accompany them.

"Wouldn't you like to go too?" he said to Rae. "You'd better come along; you may never get the chance again in your life, and it would be a pity to miss it. It's a great place to see"; and then he went on to tell about the wonderful Pribylov Islands, and the innumerable multitudes of seals that resorted thither in the summer time.

Rae listened with eager interest, and the more he heard the more anxious he became to go. The only thing that made him hesitate was the possibility of his father coming on to Sitka during his absence; but Baranov removed this difficulty by saying that word could be left for Mr. Finlayson, and if he did turn up he could follow on to the island also, and make the extra trip pay for itself by securing a lot of seal and sea-otter skins for the company.

This seemed to Rae so reasonable that he made no further objection, and Baranov, evidently much pleased, said, —

"That's right; you're a sensible fellow, and you'll never regret going up there, I know."

Having much influence at Sitka because of his family connection with its history, Baranov had little difficulty in arranging for Rae and Freckles to accompany himself on board one of the schooners bound for the Pribylov Islands; and after a couple more days at the Alaskan capital, they all set off again, with their course this time set almost due west.

In order to reach the home of the fur seal it was necessary to voyage away out into the ocean and around the far projecting chain of the Alaskan Islands, and it was not by any means all easy sailing. There were enshrouding fogs to be passed through, provoking head-winds to be struggled against, and confusing currents to be taken into account.

But the captain of the schooner was a veteran navigator in these waters, and no fog or current could throw him out of his reckoning, nor head-winds baffle him in ultimately making the point he aimed at, and so in good time he brought his schooner safely into the island of St. Paul's, the largest and most important of the Pribylov group.

On the voyage Rae learned a great deal about these islands — how they were discovered by a rugged Muscovite "stoorman," a ship's mate named Gerassim Pribylov, who, on the strength of a story told him by an old Aleutian "sharman" at Oonalaska of some mysterious islands hidden in the heart of the Behring Sea where sea-otters and seals resorted in countless numbers, had spent three years in patient persistent search for them, and at last in July, 1786 his old sloop ran up against the walls of Tolstoi

Mees at St. George's, and though the fog was so thick that he could scarce see the length of his vessel, his ears were regaled by the glad music of the seal rookeries wafted out to him on the heavy air. He knew then that he had found the object of his search, and he at once took possession of the island on behalf of the Russians.

His discovery was soon made public, and scores of schooners had followed in the wake of his own until the poor seals were in serious danger of extinction. Then came on the scene the great Russian American Company, which took the whole seal-hunting business into its own hands, and in whose service Baranov was employed at Sitka.

There was no such thing as a safe harbor at the Pribylov Islands, and the captain of the schooner had to feel his way cautiously through the fog that nine days out of ten enshrouded the islands all summer long, until the boom of the breakers, and the strange mingling of roars and barks and cries given forth by the seal herd on the rookeries, advised him of the nearness of his destination.

It chanced that just before coming to anchor the fog broke away and gave Rae a chance to see something of the strange place to which he had come.

The schooner had made her way into the cove in front of the village of St. Paul, if such miserable dwellings as were irregularly scattered along the shore could be called a village, the most of them being sod-walled and dirt-roofed structures partly under ground, called by the native inhabitants "barrabkies."

When Rae landed with Baranov and looked into one of these places, he had no desire to repeat the visit. It was dark, damp, and filthy beyond description, the use of seal-fat for fuel having caused a deposit upon everything within doors of a thick coat of greasy soot strongly impregnated with an intolerably offensive odor.

The people themselves were no more attractive than their abodes, being short and square of stature, and ugly of feature, and having the appearance of never having washed for many years.

But it was neither the village nor its inhabitants that Rae had come to see; it was the seals whose rookeries stretched along almost the whole southern shore of the island, and who were now in full occupation of both "hauling-grounds" and "breeding-grounds."

There was a small rookery a little to the north of the village called Lagoon, but on the advice of a veteran seal-hunter they kept on to Tolstoi, still further north, between which and Zapadnie the wonders of seal life could be observed in every detail.

During the stay of the schooner, Rae and Freckles paid many visits to this place, and yet saw something novel and interesting every time, until they came to regard the fur seal as one of the marvels of creation.

"I cannot tell you how thankful I am to you for bringing me up here," said Rae to Baranov at the close of their first day's sight-seeing. "I could never have believed all this without seeing it with my own eyes."

The island of St. Paul, upon which they now were,

was but a small place, being a trifle over thirteen miles in extent in length, east and west, and about six and a quarter in greatest width, north and south. Yet it was the resort of millions of seals, who crowded its sandy beaches and rocky ledges in multitudes no man could number.

For the first time in his life Rae saw the famous fur seal, the most eagerly sought after of all amphibious animals, and it was little wonder if their ways and manners filled him with amazement.

In the midst of the perpetual surf that beat upon the island were the young seals learning to swim and steer in the boisterous water; for, strange as it may seem, a baby-seal knows no more how to swim at first than a human baby does how to walk, and it has to patiently practise before it becomes at home in the deep.

There were also tumbling about in the surf to their own manifest enjoyment great numbers of the "holluschickie," as they are called by the natives — the bachelor seals, who had not yet risen to the dignity of being the heads of families; for in the seal community the males must reach the age of six or seven years before they can take unto themselves wives.

The female seals were pretty, graceful creatures, from four to four and a half feet in length, with little elastic forms and well-shaped heads, from which looked out large lustrous eyes, humid and soft with a wonderfully tender expression.

As they gambolled about in the water, or drew them-

selves up on land, bleating softly for their cubs when they were prepared to nurse, after being away to get their own food, there was something so sweet and feminine in their whole appearance that Rae's heart went out to them; and turning to Baranov he exclaimed in a tone of anticipatory indignation, for he did not yet know the methods of the fur-seal hunter:—

“And do you mean to say that they kill those beautiful creatures for the sake of their skins?”

Baranov laughed at his emphatic question.

“Why, no,” he replied; “those are the ‘matkah’ — the mothers. They are never killed. If they were, there would soon be no more seals. Only the holluschickie are killed, as I'll show you before we go away.”

“Well, I am glad to hear it,” responded Rae; “for 'pon my word, if I thought that such lovely creatures had to be killed to make that splendid coat you were so good as to give me, I am sure I could not take any pleasure in wearing it.”

Baranov smiled in a superior way, for such a range of sympathy seemed to him a sign of weakness which he would not care to confess.

“Oh, you needn't be anxious on that account. There's not a matkah skin in your coat. It's prime holluschickie every inch of it.”

The antics and contortions of the seals in the surf were exceedingly amusing, and the boys could have watched them for hours.

The best swimmers were the young bachelors, and the

graceful unconcern with which they would sport safely in among and under the booming breakers was fascinating beyond description. It would seem as if at any moment the mighty billows must in their fierce convulsions dash the daring creatures, stunned and lifeless, against the cruel boulders which lined the beach. But nothing of the kind occurred. Through the wildest and most ungovernable moods of the storm-tossed waters — for calms are unknown at the Pribylov Islands, and it is incessantly blowing hard from one quarter or another — these accomplished amphibians would amuse themselves gambolling in the seething creamy wake of the tremendous rollers which constantly broke over their alert dodging heads. The swift succeeding waves seemed every instant to poise them at the very verge of death, but exulting in their own skill and strength they bade defiance to the wrathful deep, and continued their diversions.

“Oh, if I could only swim like they can,” sighed Rae, after watching their performance in silent admiration for some time. “I don’t think I’d choose such rough water for my fun, but it would be splendid, wouldn’t it, Freckles, to be able to tumble about in that way and never hurt yourself?”

All this time, as they stood upon an elevated rocky point which gave them a clear outlook in every direction, their ears had been filled with the ceaseless roaring that came up from the rookeries where the old bulls or “see-catchie” were incessantly fighting for the possession of a bit of ground, or the company of the females.

Wonderful as the scene in the surf had been, this was even more extraordinary. Spread over many acres of sand on hard-packed earth were thousands upon thousands of huge bulls, each having his own little plot and his own group of wives, and each was apparently trying to make more noise and more of a rumpus generally than his neighbor.

They were all big brutes of fellows, that presented a striking contrast to the meek, graceful, pretty females at their side, or to the jaunty, handsome bachelors out on the surf. They had been on the ground since the spring, holding their own against the attacks of the bachelors ambitious for family privileges, and now from much fighting and long fasting were reduced to a physical condition that was positively disreputable.

A couple of months before they had hauled out from the ocean depths the very pictures of plethoric sleekness, the true aldermen of the sea. Measuring from six to seven feet in length, and weighing from four hundred to six hundred pounds, they had emerged from the boisterous brine and stepped upon the beach (for their way of progression by their fore-flippers may quite properly be called "stepping"), carrying their small, well-shaped heads high in the air, and looking about them with their large, bluish-hazel eyes, had selected locations upon which to take up family life.

Then had pandemonium set in. Every hour of the day, and night, brought fresh arrivals, who either challenged those nearest the water for their plots, or sought

to force their way through their close set ranks in order to secure places in their rear. In either case they had had to fight for their object, and these fights were no trifling affairs. Rae saw many of them during his stay at St. Paul's, and they made him wonder how creatures could be constructed to survive such terrible maulings as they gave and received.

The fighting was done entirely with the mouth. The two opponents would approach each other with heads averted in a comical fashion, just as though they felt nearly ashamed of the rumpus they were about to make. When they got within striking distance they began a series of passes or feints, which their long powerful necks enabled them to make with wonderful quickness. Their heads were darted out and back as quick as a flash, now in this direction and now in that, the one attacking, the other parrying or dodging; for in these duels one combatant was always on the offensive and the other on the defensive.

In the meantime, their hoarse roaring and shrill piping whistle filled the air, while their fat bodies writhed and swelled with rage and energy, and their eyes flashed furiously.

At length one would get a grip with his teeth on the other's flipper or shoulder, and they would close in a fierce wrestling match, the bitten one striving to shake off his opponent, and the latter holding on with merciless rigor until his sharp canines tore out a deep gutter in the former's skin, or shred the flipper into ribbon strips.

The blood would stream down from the horrid wounds inflicted, and moans of agony would take the place of the roars of rage; and at last the defeated duellist would drag himself painfully away, while the victor, content with his conquest, instead of following him up, would sink complacently back with a curious chuckle of satisfaction, and proceed to fan his fevered head with one of his hind-flippers.

At first when he saw these conflicts, Rae was strongly tempted to interfere, just as he would were two dogs fighting, the big seals seemed so determined to kill one another.

But Baranov laughed at his concern, and he soon saw the utter futility of playing the part of peacemaker where a thousand such fights were taking place every hour.

He did, however, venture to interfere once, and then had an experience that effectually taught him the wisdom of minding his own business.

One morning when he was standing in company with Baranov and Freckles upon a rocky point that overlooked one of the rookeries, and they were all three watching the extraordinary mingling of motion and noise at their feet, a very prettily-shaped "cow" hauled out of the water just at the spot occupied by a burly seecatchie, who coaxed her to his harem by a medley of chuckling, whistling, and roaring that was excessively amusing to the human spectators, and successful in effecting his object.

But she had hardly settled down upon the smooth rock which constituted her lord's domain than an adjacent

bull, no doubt inspired by the special charms of the graceful creature, reached across from his station and seized her with his mouth at the nape of the neck, just as a cat would lift a kitten.

At the same instant the first bull turned just in time to catch her in his teeth by the back, a little above the rear flippers.

Then was the poor innocent thing lifted into the air between the infuriated brutes, who tugged in opposite directions until Rae could no longer control his impulse to interfere, and, springing down to the cow's rescue, he gave each of the bulls a sharp blow on the nose with a stout stick he happened to have in his hand.

So far as the cow was concerned his interference was a brilliant success, for both the rivals let go of her instantly, and she slid back to her place not much injured. But Rae came very near suffering in her stead in a way that in his sympathetic haste he had not reckoned upon.

Just as he delivered the second blow his feet slipped on the slime that covered the rock, and down he went right between the two enraged monsters, who, quite forgetting the bewitching cause of their conflict, now turned their whole attention upon the boy who had so rashly ventured to intermeddle in their domestic affairs.

The moment Rae tried to regain his feet one of them promptly knocked him down, and the other stood over him with gleaming teeth displayed in a most terrifying fashion.

“Lie still, for God’s sake! Don’t try to move, or they’ll kill you between them,” shouted Baranov, as, with Freckles at his heels, he rushed to Rae’s rescue, his blanched countenance showing how grave he considered the boy’s peril to be.

CHAPTER XX.

THE WAYS AND MANNERS OF THE SEAL.

WHEN Rae found himself at the mercy of the two furious seecatchie, he was no less surprised than scared. He had never imagined that he had anything to fear from them, taking it for granted that he could spring out of their way with the utmost ease.

But, instead of being able to do so, he could not even get upon his feet. Within the reach of their long, powerful necks they were as agile as panthers, and met every move he attempted to make with their bewhiskered heads, whose long white teeth could inflict such fearful wounds.

Happily neither of them succeeded in getting his teeth into Rae's flesh, although one caught the sleeve of his jacket, and tore it off at the shoulder; and before anything worse could happen, Baranov and Freckles were at hand.

They also carried stout sticks, and, each taking one of the bulls, plied him so vigorously with blows that both were fain to beat a prompt retreat, roaring and whistling in sullen rage.

When Rae picked himself up he presented such a sorry spectacle that the other two could not keep back their laughter; and, recognizing the humor of the situation, he had the good sense to join in the mirth.

Although in reality none the worse save for a bruise or two, he looked as if he ought to be sent to hospital. He was daubed all over with the slime of the rookery, and, moreover, had been liberally spattered with blood from the wounds the bulls had inflicted on each other before he had taken a hand in the affair.

“Are you badly hurt, Rae?” inquired Baranov, with sincere concern in his voice, so soon as he could get it steady enough to speak. “They’ve given you a pretty rough handling.”

“Not a bit,” replied Rae, giving himself a good shake to make sure there were no bones broken; “they’ve only dirtied me up a lot, that’s all. I must hurry back to the schooner and clean up.”

Freckles, still seemingly anxious, took hold of the arm from which the sleeve had been torn, and passed his hand over it tenderly.

“Are you all right here?” he asked. “I was afraid that big brute was going to hurt you dreadfully.”

“He’s spoiled my shirt, Freckles,” answered Rae, looking ruefully at the torn garment, “and it’s one of the best I’ve got; but I ought to be thankful at getting off so easily. I never thought those creatures could be so quick. I tell you I’ll have more respect for them after this.”

They all returned to the schooner, where Rae put on some clean clothes and had his bruises looked after, and then felt ready for a fresh adventure.

No mishap ever daunted his spirit. In the words of the song, he "bobbed up serenely" after each buffet at the hands of fate, and proposed to continue to do so as long as health and strength were spared him.

The rough treatment given him by the old seecatchie in no wise dampened his zeal for further study of the strange and interesting ways of the fur seal, and every day added to the stores of information that he told himself he would find such pleasure in retailing to the good people at Fort Camosun, none of whom had, so far as he knew, ever visited the Pribylov Islands.

It was just the season when the "kotickie" or pups were in their most amusing stage, and the three lads had a great deal of fun with the funny little creatures.

They were all jet black in color, and had big innocent eyes, with which they gazed about them in an inquiring way that was very comical. They were perpetual motion incarnate, and seemed never to take any rest except, perhaps, when being fed by their mothers.

A remarkable thing was the unfailing accuracy with which the mothers would pick out their own pups from the countless thousands that swarmed through the rookeries. The little things, being as fond of company as other children, always gathered in groups or "pods"; and when the mothers came in from the sea, whither they had been to wash and feed, they would stop at

the edge of the pod where they thought their offspring ought to be, and "blaat" just like sheep calling for their lambs.

Considering the multitude of "kotickie," all seeming as much alike as so many pins, and the incessant din prevailing, this proceeding on the mother's part might seem a very futile one. But such was not the case.

After a few trials, the solicitous parent would hear the cry of her own furry baby, and then make straight for it through the crowd, showing entire indifference to the safety of the other youngsters as she struck out right and left with her fore-flippers.

After watching this proceeding several times, Rae came to the conclusion that the pups did not know their own mothers, but it being their nature to cry out incessantly while awake, their mothers were bound to hear them bleat before long and hunt them out.

When not down at the water's edge learning to swim, the pups would pod in the rear of the large rookeries, and this was one of the most fascinating sights in the island.

From the summit of Cross Hill, looking southward and westward over a reach of alternate grass and sand-dunes, Rae could see hundreds of thousands of the shiny black things sporting about in the jolliest of moods, or stretched out asleep when they had had enough of play for a time.

Going down amongst them sometimes, he would find lively amusement in their antics as they took alarm at

his approach, and with a medley of coughing, spitting, snorting, and blaating shambled spasmodically away a few yards; and then, forgetting all about him, they would resume their playing or sleeping just as though nobody had been so rude as to disturb them.

Another interesting sight was that of the pups learning to swim. Driven by instinct to the margin of the beach, they would hesitatingly smell and then touch the little pools, and roll around in the upper wash of the surf, until beginning to feel more at home they would venture out into deeper water.

At first they would flounder about in the most awkward manner, thrashing the water with their fore-flippers just as little dogs do with their fore-feet, and making no use of the hind-flippers. With wide open mouths and staring eyes, they would thus paddle and splash until little by little they learned to use their powers aright, and to realize their mastery over the water.

Then were they the happiest creatures alive. Their chunky black forms fairly coruscated in the surf as, swimming in endless evolutions, twisting, diving, turning, and all the time chattering like a mob of children, they played all day long with seemingly exhaustless zest and energy.

Rae would have dearly liked to have secured a mother seal and a pup to take away with him, but Baranov assured him they could not be kept alive in captivity. The experiment had been often tried, but never with success. The seals would not eat, and died of starvation.

Shortly after the arrival of the schooner the killing of the "holluschiekie" for the sake of their skins began, and the boys went once to the "killing grounds." These were situated not far from the village of St. Paul, and one look at them was sufficient to discover their sinister character, for they were thickly sprinkled with the bleached skeletons and the grinning skulls of the victims of preceding years.

The driving of the seals to the spot Rae found rather amusing, although it did appeal to his tender sympathies sometimes. The manner of it was as follows:—

Getting up at dawn, the Aleuts whose duty it was would slip quietly down to the sand-beach and place themselves between the sleeping droves of holluschiekie and the water before the creatures suspected their presence.

Then they would make a row by clattering bones together and shouting, and the seals would wake up suddenly from their last sleep on earth. On awaking they would, of course, instinctively turn to the water, but, seeing men between them and their natural refuge, they would immediately whirl round, and scramble and lope hurriedly back up and over the land, the Aleuts leisurely following the drove thus secured, and directing its course over to the killing grounds.

Not more than half-a-mile an hour could be expected from the doomed creatures, so that it was work that required abundant patience, especially as rests had to be allowed every few yards in order that the seals might not

get overheated from their exertions, which would have a bad effect upon their skins, seriously damaging the fine fur.

The method of progression was the same in all cases — a kind of walking step, and a sliding shambling gallop, the whole drove moving with a succession of starts, spasmodic and irregular, made every few minutes after pauses to catch the breath, and to gaze about in a plaintive way that was quite pathetic.

During these rests they would pant like so many dogs, and fan themselves vigorously with their hind-flippers, not moving forward again until urged by the noise of the natives. They no more attempted to show fight than would a flock of sheep, seeming to be in mortal terror of men, and to be willing to do anything at their bidding.

Every now and then a seal would become exhausted, and after dragging itself painfully along for a few yards would collapse utterly and be left behind, quivering and panting, not to revive for hours, or perhaps never at all.

It was these cases that touched Rae's heart. He would have liked to pick up every such seal and carry it back to the water, but of course there was no doing anything of the kind ; so he kept on to the killing grounds, whose gruesome sights soon made him forget the sufferings of those by the wayside.

Having been driven up on the flats between the east landing and the village, the seals were herded there until they had rested and were cooled off. Then all the Aleuts

gathered to the slaughter, in which, of course, the boys took no part.

Each man was armed with a long wooden club, a stabbing-knife, and a skinning-knife, and the whole party were under the direction of foremen, who divided up the work so that not a moment might be wasted once it had begun.

At the signal of the chief foreman the men entered the drove and cut out from it a hundred or more seals, constituting a "pod," which they surrounded in a circle, huddling the creatures together so that they might be within easy reach of the clubs.

Then the chief, casting his eye over the panting, writhing mass, rapidly pointed out those that were not worth killing—one being too badly torn by an opponent's tusks, another being too young, and a third too old, and so forth.

This being done, he gave the command to strike, and instantly the heavy clubs fell all around the circle, every animal that was eligible being stretched out, stunned and motionless, with a celerity that was simply amazing.

Dropping their clubs, the men then seized the prostrated animals by the hind-flippers, and, spreading them out flat, plunged their stabbing-knives into their warm bodies between the fore-flippers. The heart was thus pierced, the blood gushed forth, and the quivering of the creature ceased forever.

As soon as all those in the "pod" had been disposed of, the process of skinning commenced. It was evidently

severe work, and even the long-practised Aleuts found it exceedingly exhausting. Rolling the body over until it balanced squarely on its back, the native made a single swift cut through the skin down along the neck, chest, and belly, from the lower jaw to the root of the tail, using for the purpose his long stabbing-knife. Then, straddling the seal, a sweeping circular incision was made around the flippers just at the point where the body-fur ended, after which, seizing a flap of the skin, the man proceeded with his shorter skinning-knife rapidly to separate it from the body and blubber until it was entirely free, the whole operation taking the most expert skimmers only a minute and a half.

The handling of one "pod" was quite enough for Rae. The plaintive blaating of the poor helpless seals, the crushing blows of the clubs, the plunging of the long knives into the plump, sleek breasts, and the swift stripping off of the soft rich skin soon wrought in him profound disgust.

"Come, Freckles!" he exclaimed, as almost overpowering qualms of nausea rose within him; "I can't stand any more of this. Let us go."

There was more than a suspicion of a sneer in the smile with which Baranov heard these words. To him each skin represented an addition to the profits of the company, and the more energetically the swarthy Aleuts toiled at their repulsive task, the better he was pleased.

But Rae affected not to notice the sneer, and hastened

away from the sights and smells that were so abhorrent to him.

Baranov, as if repenting of seeming disagreeable, presently hastened after him, saying pleasantly, "Since you don't like that, Rae, I'll show you something better to-morrow. We'll go out to Walrus Island."

"Walrus Island?" asked Rae, glad of a change of subject. "Where is that? and what can you do there?"

"Just wait until I show you," was Baranov's response, and no further information would he give.

The next morning was bright and clear, and free from boisterous winds, so that they were able to start with good prospects of a pleasant trip. Walrus Island lay about six miles eastward from St. Paul's, and was nothing more than a mere ledge of lava, flat-capped and lifting itself just above the wash of the waves, being scarcely more than a quarter of a mile in length, and one hundred yards in greatest breadth.

As the clumsy "bidarra" or native boat approached the island, the first thing Rae noticed was the marvellous multitude of birds squatting upon its level surface or darkening the air with their whirring wings. They swarmed as thickly as mosquitoes in a swamp; indeed, it seemed hard to understand how they avoided colliding with one another in the air, or crowding each other off the surface of the rock into the sea that splashed all round their limited domain.

"Where do they all come from?" he exclaimed in wonderment. "You'd think all the birds in Behring's

Sea must be there. I never saw anything like it in my life."

"They are just like that every year," answered Baranov, who greatly enjoyed this acting as guide to the strange sights of the possessions of the Russian American Company; "and no matter how many you kill, or how many of their eggs you take, it makes no difference in their numbers."

They had to be very careful in effecting a landing, for there was no beach or shore, the sides of the island rising like walls out of the sea; and it took all the dexterity of the natives to bring their bidarrahs near enough for the boys to jump out upon a jutting ledge. As it was, Freckles slipped on its slimy surface, and would have fallen back into the water but for the timely help of Baranov, who seized his arm and drew him out of danger.

The birds, although they evidently were aware of the approach of the bidarrahs, showed no signs of disturbance until the boys had fairly landed. Then those nearest them rose in clouds from the eggs which they were hatching, and before they had control of their flight, many of them went bang into the intruders upon their domain, hitting them right and left with such violence that they were fain to crouch down upon their knees until this extraordinary hail-storm was over.

After the first commotion had subsided, the visitors were able to stand up and look about them. The scene was certainly a remarkable one. The birds fairly covered the surface of the rocky island with their feathered

forms, while as many more whirled in rapid flight overhead, so thickly interweaving their evolutions as to hide the sky from sight.

When to this were added the stunning whirr of innumerable strong wings beating the air, the shrill screams of the gulls, the muffled croaking of the "arries," and the indescribable disagreeable smell arising from the broken eggs, and other decaying substance, the whole impression was one of amazement, and never to be forgotten.

Rae and Freckles started to pick up some of the eggs, but soon had their hands so full that they could carry no more, and turned them over to the natives, who were only too glad to get them.

Rae noted that the different kinds of birds divided their scanty territory between them, the "arries" occupying a narrow strip all round the edge of the island, the kittiwakes and little auks sharing the face of the cliffs with the sea-parrots and cormorants, and the big white burgomaster gulls occupying the interior, where among the grassy tussocks they built neat nests of dry grass and sea-ferns, and reared their young in comfort.

Nor were the birds the only interesting inhabitants of the remarkable little island. At the further end was to be seen a large herd of male walrus that made it their home every summer.

They were huge, hideous, morose-looking creatures, who manifested no fear whatever at the appearance of the boys, but snorted and growled in a threatening fashion, as though to say,—

“What brings you here? This is our home, and we didn’t invite you. Be off with you at once.”

One of them looked so very disagreeable that Baranov was moved to take a shot at him with his pistol — they had not brought their guns — whereat the ugly brute plunged into the water, and the others promptly followed his example, all moving with a degree of ease and speed that seemed inconsistent with their clumsy forms.

“Do the natives kill many of the walrus?” asked Rae, as he watched the long-tusked monsters surging through the waves in angry confusion.

“No,” replied Baranov. “They’re not much use, and they’re let alone most of the time; but the natives do take a good many sea-lion every season, and we must go over to their hauling-grounds and have a look at them if it’s fine.”

Being anxious to see all that was to be seen, in order that he might have the more to tell his father, Rae said he would like very much to make the acquaintance of the sea-lion, and Baranov promised to see about it forthwith.

The hauling-grounds of the sea-lion were at the North-East Point, and guided by a native the three boys made their way over to them the following morning. Owing to the fact that, although twice as big and strong as the fur seal, the sea-lion is a miserable coward, and at the first sign of the approach of man stampedes incontinently into the water, they could not walk boldly up to where they were congregated, but had to be content with observing them from a distance.

They were magnificent looking creatures, the old bulls particularly, as they reared themselves upon their powerful fore-arms full six feet in height, and roared out challenges to their own kind in a tremendous bass voice that rose above the ceaseless booming of the surf. Measuring ten feet in length, and from eight to nine feet in girth at the shoulders, and weighing from twelve hundred to fourteen hundred pounds, they seemed veritable "sea-kings," and fit to cope with almost any antagonist, yet a small boy with a rattle could put a thousand of them to ignominious flight, and had Rae allowed them to get a good look at him he would have had no chance of getting a good look at them.

But if they were mortally afraid of man, they were not of each other, and, like the "seecatchie," were always having fierce fights in which they gave and received terrible wounds. Not one adult male was free from hideous scars, and being totally without fur, these showed the more plainly. A tremendous combat between two bulls took place just in front of the spot where the boys were concealed, and they had a fine view of it.

Opening with a long round of roaring the gladiators of the sea gradually came together with averted heads, as though the very sight of each other was sickening, and began a series of feints for an opening, darting out and withdrawing their heads with a swiftness that the eye could hardly follow. At length one of them succeeded in striking his teeth into the thick skin of his opponent's jowl, and then, clinching his jaws, held grimly on until

the struggles of the tortured victim tore them loose, leaving a gaping wound big enough to hold Rae's fist.

Nothing daunted by his fearful injury the bull retaliated by fastening his teeth into the other's neck, and held on in his turn until shaken loose in the same way; and so, while the blood and foam bespattered the ground, and their hoarse ferocious roaring filled the air, the great creatures fought on until in sheer exhaustion they were compelled to fall back, panting as though they were drawing their last breath.

"That's worth seeing, isn't it, Rae?" said Baranov.

"Nothing like that down in your country, eh?"

Loyal as he was to his own, Rae had to admit that Baranov's boast could not be gainsaid, and he racked his brains to try and find something to offset against the sea-lions. At length he bethought himself of some great mountain elk he had seen before he left Fort Vancouver, and forthwith launched into so vivid a description of those monarchs of the forest as to fill Baranov with a hunter's fierce longing to see them for himself.

"And are they so grand as that?" he queried.

"Then, as sure as my name is Alexander Baranov, I'll come down to your country sometime, and you must show me where I'll see some of the elk."

Rae readily promised to help him all he could in the matter, and then felt much easier in his mind, seeing that he had thus restored the balance between the Russian and English possessions by setting off mountain elk against sea-lions as objects of patriotic pride.

Taking care not to allow themselves to be seen, the boys spent several hours watching the sea-lions who were coming out from the sea, and returning to it in an apparently continuous procession, varied only by frequent fights between the old bulls.

As swimmers they surpassed even the fur seals, careering through the wild billows, and performing all sorts of seemingly impossible feats in their very midst. For such heavy animals their agility was certainly astonishing, and they apparently enjoyed the sport immensely.

"If we were to stay at St. Paul's a little longer we'd see the natives drive the sea-lions up to the killing grounds," said Baranov; "but they won't be doing that until they're done with the fur seals."

"What good are the sea-lions? They've got no fur," asked Rae.

"Why," replied Baranov, "the natives make their 'bidarkies' and bidarrahs with their skins, and capital boats they are too, if you don't keep them in the water too long. Then they make waterproof coats out of their intestines, and they eat the meat and use the blubber for oil, so you see they don't kill them for the fun of the thing."

Rae was not at all sorry to miss another "killing." It could not fail to be even more unpleasant a performance than in the case of the seals, and he felt much more desirous of seeing the funny little blue and white foxes which Baranov had spoken about.

There were many of these upon the islands, who found

comfortable holes for their accommodation and retreat among the countless chinks and crevices of the basaltic rocks. Feeding upon the weak and sickly seals, and the young pups when they could get them, they grew fat in the summer time, and were full of vigor.

The boys had a capital day's sport hunting them, and it was no easy job to get a good shot at them, they were so wary and so swift of flight. They succeeded in getting half-a-dozen good specimens, whose brushes were duly lopped off for trophies.

Thus each day of the schooner's stay at St. Paul's had its own interest, and the time flew by so rapidly that Rae was surprised when Baranov announced that they must be returning to Sitka, as the business upon which the schooner had come was all transacted, and there was no excuse for remaining any longer.

Rae would not have been sorry to spend another month at St. Paul's, there were so many things of interest in and around that wonderful island. At the same time he was glad to be going back to Sitka, because of his hope of his finding his father there, or at least of getting some word concerning him.

"We're going to call at Belcovsky on our way back," Baranov told Rae, "and perhaps we may have a chance to see some otter-hunting. I do hope we will, for it's fine sport, I tell you."

Knowing nothing about this place, Rae had a good many questions to ask, which Baranov took pleasure in answering; and so he learned that it was a village on

the eastern side of the long Aleutian peninsula which was the centre of the sea-otter hunting. There, ever since 1780, the Russians had been firmly established, and had derived immense profits from the trade in sea-otter skins, the natives doing the hunting, and the Russians reaping most of the benefit, as might naturally be expected, seeing that they had matters entirely in their own hands.

In order to reach Belcovsky it was necessary to circumnavigate the far projecting peninsula, and this proved no easy task. Indeed, the weather was so stormy that the captain of the schooner would fain have given up the project, and made straight for Sitka. But Baranov persuaded him to persevere, and at last, after much buffeting from wind and wave, the stanch little vessel found her way into the desired port without a mishap of any kind.

Rae saw before him, as the schooner came to anchor, a little town clinging to the flanks of a mountain that loomed up precipitously behind it, and was usually so wreathed in fog as not to allow its summit to be visible. Here several hundred Aleutian sea-otter hunters lived with their families in very unattractive-looking dwellings called "barrabkies."

As soon as they could the two boys got off in the boat, and pulled to the landing, which was nothing better than a sheltered surf eddy in the shadow of the blackest and most forbidding of bluffs.

Having landed, not without difficulty, they climbed

up the sloping slide of mossy earth and stones which was the only way from the shore to the town, and down the middle of which a clear babbling brook tumbled merrily. At the top of the slope they found themselves in the town, and surrounded by a curious throng of natives, who were evidently very glad to see them.

Rae returned with interest the scrutiny to which the visitors were subjected, and found the Aleuts not at all an ill-looking people. They were mostly short and squat of figure, with broad faces that had very little acquaintance with soap and water, high cheek bones, flat noses, and small black eyes set in a way that gave their owners a Japanese expression.

The young people had quite fair complexions, but the older ones had faces of parchment, deeply wrinkled. From their spending so much of their life in the cramped "bidarka," the men were well developed in the chest and arms, but decidedly sprung at the knees, and walked in an unsteady pigeon-toed fashion.

Their houses, or barrabkies, were only one half above the ground, and covered with heavy sods, so that they looked like huge burrows.

Rae peeped into one, but the close fetid air made him beat a hasty retreat, and he had no desire for another look.

As Baranov's object was to inquire about the chance of sharing in a sea-otter hunt, and to make arrangements therefor, he sought out the chief hunter in the village,

and engaged him in conversation while Rae and Freckles looked about them.

Presently the Russian came up with a beaming face.

“It’s all right,” he cried exultantly. “Kahgoon says we may come, and he’s going to fix everything for us.”

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SEA-OTTER HUNT.

BARANOV'S news was intensely satisfactory, in view of the eagerness of the boys to take part in a real sea-otter hunt. Kahgoon, the chief hunter at Belcovsky, moved in part by a diplomatic desire to be in good favor with Baranov, who would probably in time become the chief officer of the Russian American Company, and in part by the promise of a fine present if the hunt were a success, had promised to arrange for the boys to accompany the next hunting party, and would duly notify them when to be ready. In the meantime they must wait until the natives who would be sent out returned with a report of otter being seen.

While they were somewhat impatiently, it must be confessed, awaiting the word from Kahgoon, Rae learned much about the strange animal whose pelt was more precious than any other animal known to the fur-dealer.

So much resembling the beaver in shape as to be called after that animal by the natives, the otter, he was told, unlike the beaver, spent very little time on land. In fact, it only came ashore in severe storms to get a rest from the tiresome tumbling of the billows.

So far as the hunters knew, having never seen a mother and her pup on the rocks or beaches, the otter was born at sea in one of the floating kelp-beds which covered large expanses of the northern waters, and there, literally "rocked in the cradle of the deep," grew up to maturity.

From an ugly little pup a foot in length, covered with brownish brindled hair, the otter gradually improved with age, until at four years it was at its prime, having then a coat of the most lustrous softness and ebony shimmering, so highly prized that a perfect one would bring not less than five hundred dollars at the great marts of the fur trade.

Just such a splendid fellow did Rae hope to share in securing, although the more he heard of the difficulties of the chase, the less sanguine he became of having his desire gratified.

There were, he learned, three modes of hunting in vogue — to wit, clubbing, surf-shooting, and spearing-surrounds.

Clubbing was possible only for natives. No white man could take part in it, as a description of the proceeding at once makes manifest.

Between the west end of Kadiak Island and the Straits of Oonimak lay the chief hunting ground of the sea-otter or "kahlan," as the natives called him. Here were a succession of small rocky islands covered with kelp and sea-weed, to which the animal resorted when wearied with stormy weather, coming no further ashore, however, than to be just free of the surf-wash.

So quick is the hearing and keen the smell possessed by these most shy and sensitive of all creatures, that only in the midst of a wild storm, when the billows are breaking with thunderous roar upon the beach, and the air is thick with flying spume, can even a native approach near enough to crush in its head with a blow from his club, and consequently this method of taking requires the co-operation of a furious gale, such as no white man would care to face for the sake of any animal, however valuable its skin.

Yet the Aleuts will never let a good opportunity slip by, and although the wind may be tearing the crests of the breakers into tatters, and the spume and spray be whirring and whizzing through the air like sheets of rain, they will launch their *bidarkies*, seat themselves within, lash their "*kamlaykas*" firmly over the rims of the man-holes, so that no water may find its way inside, and then boldly striking out beyond the protection of the cliff, plunge into the very vortex of the fearful sea, and scud like an arrow before the gale that has been blowing from the west for the past three days without cessation, until it seems as if wind and wave could not conceivably rage more fiercely together.

What can be the meaning of such seeming madness? Surely they are throwing their lives away. Possibly they are; for if in the twenty miles' wild scudding before the wind and howling tempest they deviate but one paddle's length from the course they have in mind, and consequently fail to hit the tiny islet which is their goal, they must be swept on and out into a vast marine waste, where

death from exhaustion and exposure would be their inevitable doom.

But they have no such ill-fortune. By their acute instinct they have discerned that the storm will last only a few hours longer, and they know that upon the rocky islet for which they are aiming there will be perhaps many otters which the long-continued fury of the gale has driven ashore to bury their globose heads in heaps of seaweed for protection from the pitiless pelting of the wind, and to sleep there, just above the wash of the surf, in great comfort until the weather shall moderate.

So the two hunters keep on their way, balancing their frail skin boat in the billows with marvellous skill, and maintaining their course by some subtle instinct they could not explain themselves, until at last they run in between the breakers to the leeward of the islet, land without injury either to themselves or their crank craft, and club in hand creep upon their prey.

The roaring of the wind and the booming of the surges prevent their kelp-bedded victims, keen as their hearing is, from getting warning of their approach, and before the sleeping creatures are aware of danger, the heavy club has descended upon their heads, and their days are numbered. In this way two Aleutian brothers once slew over seventy otters in less than an hour!

But it is no undertaking for white men. Only natives could dare such dangers, and Rae felt no desire to emulate the achievements of Kahgoon and his brethren in this direction.

Surf-shooting was another mode of securing the sea-otter, but it was not much in use, having come in with the recent introduction of firearms. During heavy weather the shores of Saanak and the Chernaboors would be patrolled by natives bearing muskets, and whenever a sea-otter's head was seen in the surf it would be shot at, and as a bullet in the head was instantly fatal, the hunter, if successful in his shot, had only to wait with a long landing-gaff for the waves to heave the precious prize within his ready reach.

Rae and Baranov did try this method one day in the midst of a raging gale, but the wind and spray dashing in their faces prevented them from taking accurate aim, and they were fain, after wasting much powder, to give up in disgust, although the natives, with much inferior weapons, were able to secure several good skins the same day.

They were therefore all the more eager to try their luck at the "spearing-surround," and hailed with great satisfaction the announcement that Kahgoon had made arrangements for one to take place the following morning, the gale which had been blowing for two days having worked itself out, and the indications being favorable for a fine calm morning such as was necessary for their purpose.

Kahgoon's reading of the weather omens was amply justified by a brilliant sunrise such as rarely blessed that region of storms, where wind, rain, snow, and fog are so pitilessly persistent that it is said good Bishop Veniaminov, when he first came among the Aleutian Islands,

ordered the curriculum of hell to be omitted from the church breviary for the reason that the natives had enough of it here in this earth!

As soon as possible after dawn the fleet of bidarkies set forth.

There were nearly twenty of these odd-looking but serviceable craft, all having two occupants, with the exception of a very large one which held Rae, Baranov, and Freckles, besides the four natives who were to paddle it.

The ordinary bidarkies in appearance much resembled clumsy Rob Roy canoes, and were made by stretching untanned sea-lion skins over a light framework of wood lashed together with sinews. The skins were put on wet and soft, and when they dried out they became as taut as the parchment of a drum. Then they were thickly smeared with seal-oil, which rendered them able to keep out the water for many hours, although a long-continued exposure was apt to soften the skin covering and cause it to slacken.

Each bidarka had two man-holes, the sea-otter hunters always going in pairs. The big one that held the boys was open, not decked in like the others, and provided with thwarts upon which they could sit.

Had they not been going so far out to sea, Rae would have liked very much to share a double bidarka with one of the natives; but when Baranov explained that they might be all day on the water, he wisely decided that he would be safer and more comfortable in the big fellow,

where there would be room to turn around, and he need not be constantly paddling as he would be in the other.

It was surprising the speed the natives, whose paddling powers were developed to the utmost, got out of their skin boats. They fairly danced over the water, which had hardly a ripple upon it, and seemed as innocent of harm to humanity as a baby, and yet every native knew right well that placid and peaceful as it was then, it could rise at the bidding of a sudden gale into mountain billows that would sweep the frail bidarkies out into the measureless spaces of the North Pacific, from which they might never return.

But no one allowed any thoughts of this kind to trouble them just then. The morning was flawless for their purpose. There was every reason to expect success, and even the most stolid of the Aleuts had a bright look on his grimy countenance as the bidarkies, keeping well together, left Belcovsky far behind.

When the hunting-ground was reached, the fleet spread out into a single long line, an interval of a hundred feet or so being between each two bidarkies. Thus arranged they paddled softly and slowly over the rolling water, every native peering eagerly ahead and around for the first sign of the otter's presence, though it be no more than the tip of his blunt head lifted for an instant above the surface for breath and observation.

The excitement was all the more intense for having to be so carefully suppressed, as a chance cough, or a splash with the paddles, or any other noise however slight,

would instantly give warning to the creature, whose sense of sight, smell, and hearing are not surpassed in acuteness by those of any other animal known to man.

In the stillness Rae could hear his heart beating so loudly that he feared its throbbings might be audible to the otter if he should rise anywhere near the big bidarka, but he could not put any check upon it. He found it hard enough to keep motionless upon the thwart while the natives sent the boat slipping softly through the water with hardly a ripple.

It seemed an age to the eager boys before the "view-hallo," was raised, and then old Kahgoon was the lucky man. His keen eyes had detected the rufous-white nose of an otter lifted for a moment above the waves, and instantly his paddle was raised in token thereof, and the signal passed silently along the line.

Not a word was spoken, not a paddle splashed, yet the vigilant sensitive creature had taken the alarm, and with powerful strokes of its strong webbed hind-feet, which smote the water like the blades of a steamer's propeller, had shot down into the depths of the sea, and away along underneath with the speed of a salmon.

Kahgoon, bringing his bidarka to a full stop directly in the bubbling wake of the otter's disappearance, hoisted his paddle high in the air, and held it there while the other boats whirled over the water into a large circle nearly half-a-mile in diameter.

The kahlan had vanished, but he must reappear soon, for he could not stay under indefinitely, and the game

was to cover so wide an area that when he did come up to breathe some one in the circle would be certain to see him.

Sure enough, after fifteen minutes of submersion, the creature rose again breathless, and this time so near the big bidarka that both Rae and Baranov saw him simultaneously.

There was no longer need for silence, and with shouts of "There he is! I see him!" they urged their paddles towards the spot.

Instantly the kahlan dived again without having had time to take a good breath, so that he would not be able to stay under so long this time, while the boys' bidarka took up its station where he had gone down, and the paddles were held on high for another circle to form.

In this way the hunted creature was compelled to dive and dive again, without being allowed a chance to get one full breath, while the exciting chase continued for over an hour, the natives all the time throwing their spears at him whenever they came anywhere within range, as the hunter who got first blood was, by accepted law, the fortunate possessor of the precious pelt.

Each disappearance of the kahlan was briefer than its predecessor, and the fatal circle drew closer about him. To the excitement of the chase was now added the intense eagerness for first blood, and the spears flew about so recklessly that there seemed danger of something else than the otter falling a victim to them.

At length, exhausted by his tremendous exertions, and

swollen with air so as to be unable any more to dive, the otter floated helplessly on the water, and a well-aimed throw of Kahgoon's spear transfixed its palpitating form.

The chase was over, the prize won, and all rejoiced with the veteran hunter over his success, and hoped that they would be the lucky one next time.

Having rested for a little while and having had a chat together, the Aleuts lined out again, and moved on over the water in quest of a fresh victim. In the course of an hour another otter was sighted, and the same tactics as before were adopted.

This time kahlan led them a tremendous chase. He was a very large powerful fellow, and swam with wonderful speed, thus managing to outwit his pursuers more than once, and to get a good full breath, whereby he was enabled to prolong the struggle for escape.

So absorbed in the hunt did all become, that they failed to notice the sudden and ominous change that was taking place in the weather.

As has already been indicated, the Aleutian peninsula may fairly claim to be the storm centre of the world, for indeed nowhere else do storms come up so suddenly or rage more furiously. Every attempt at forecasting the coming weather is futile, because of there being no certain indications by which to be guided, and a bureau of weather probabilities would be so often incorrect in its predictions as to become the laughing-stock of the community.

Now the day of the "spear-surround" promised well if ever a day did, and not even the veteran Kahgoon had any suspicions of its proving otherwise. Yet not long after noon, and just when the whole party were most intensely interested in the pursuit of the second otter, the sky suddenly clouded over, the wind rose, and with it the sea to such an extent that, resigning all thoughts of the otter, the Aleuts gave their whole attention to getting back to Belcovsky.

But this getting back threatened to prove more than an easy job. They had worked almost due south in their hunting, and the storm was coming down from the north. They had therefore to go right into it if they would retrace their course.

As the white caps began to hiss savagely beside their bidarka, and even to break on board, despite the skilful management of the natives, the boys looked at each other with startled anxious faces.

"We're in for a big storm," said Rae, "and I'm afraid we'll have a hard time getting out of it. Can this thing stand much rough weather?"

"Oh yes," replied Baranov, "it can stand it all right so long as the skin stays tight; but after being in the water a good while it gets soft and stretches, and then there's nothing to do but make for land as fast as possible."

"Then if we don't get ashore pretty soon our bidarka will become good for nothing, is that it?" asked Rae, his face white with horror at the thought of such a thing happening out in the midst of that wild waste of waters.

“Oh, why did we come at all?” he added in a wailing tone; “we had far better have stayed on board the schooner.”

Freckles shivered with cold and fright, and crept closer up to him, murmuring, “Do you think we can’t get back to the schooner, Rae?”

“Oh, come now,” said Baranov, striving to put a brave face on the matter, “it’s not so bad as all that. If we can’t make our way up to Belcovsky, they will try for one of the islands about here, and stay there until the storm is over.”

The first impulse of terror having spent itself, Rae became more composed, and in a much steadier tone said, —

“Why, of course. I never thought of that. See, perhaps that’s what they’re doing now.”

While they had been talking the storm had grown rapidly worse, and now the wind and sea were so violent that it seemed a miracle that even such expert paddlers as the Aleuts could keep the clumsy bidarka from being overturned.

It was tossed from billow to billow like a mere chip, and a single false stroke from one of the natives would infallibly have caused its overturn. Yet, although the spray splashed clear over its occupants, and an occasional wave succeeded in flinging its crest on board, they managed by what really seemed a succession of miracles to keep right side up, and even to make some headway against the gale.

But soon they realized the hopelessness of forcing their frail craft in the face of such a storm over the many miles of ocean that tossed so furiously between them and Belcovsky, and, adopting the only other alternative, by a dexterous sweep of their paddles swung the bidarka around so that it was heading due south-east instead of due north.

“They’re going to try for Saanak,” said Baranov, as soon as he saw the change in their course, and his face lit up as he added, “If we make Saanak we’ll be all right. We can stay there till the storm’s all over.”

“Yes,” replied Rae, “and the others are doing the same thing. Look!”

Sure enough all the bidarkies in sight had also turned and were scudding before the wind, the light things seeming to skip over the frothing billows that raged all about them.

Under some circumstances this flying over the sea might have been good fun for so adventurous a spirit as Rae’s, but he was in too perilous a case now to take into consideration anything save their chances of ultimate escape from the dangers that threatened on every side.

It would indeed be difficult to imagine three persons in a more perilous predicament than were Baranov, Freckles, and Rae. Utterly powerless to help themselves, they could only crouch in the stern of the bidarka, and put their entire dependence upon the Aleutian paddlers to save them from death, while the roaring, raging waters flung their flimsy craft from wave to wave as if rejoicing

in the cruel sport. Every hour's exposure of their bidarka to the water rendered it less sea-worthy. Indeed, they could already note a softening and stretching of the skin covering, that showed how near at hand was yet another danger against which no human skill could provide. Yet they faced the crisis with a composure as remarkable as it was admirable. Neither the Russian nor the Scotch boy was willing to let the other surpass him in fortitude, and Freckles, taking courage from them, bore himself as bravely as either.

"If we miss Saanak, is there any other island we might make?" asked Rae of Baranov.

"None that I know of," was the reply. "Sanaak's the last island of the chain, and if we miss it we'll go right out into the ocean. God alone knows where."

The other bidarkies were now widely scattered over the sea, and only a few of them could be seen by the boys. Being much smaller than the one they were in, and therefore presenting less surface to the wind, they were more easily managed, and were rapidly distancing their big companion.

"All the rest are leaving us behind," said Rae in a mournful tone, pointing to where the nearest of them was bobbing over the waves a hundred yards ahead.

"So they are," answered Baranov. "But it doesn't matter. They couldn't give us any help anyway. They've all they can do to look after themselves."

And now, to add to the horrors of their situation, the day began to darken around them. Night was near at

hand, and with the disappearance of daylight it seemed as though their last ray of hope must vanish also.

True, the violence of the wind seemed abating somewhat; but what of that? Not even the keen-eyed Aleuts could find their way to Saanak in the dark, and if they did not reach the island, how else could they be saved from death?

“God help us!” groaned Rae, as he realized that their cup of misery and peril was now full to the brim; “we’re done for sure. We’ll never be able to find Saanak at night, and our bidarka won’t float till morning.”

CHAPTER XXII.

REUNION AND REJOICINGS.

MR. FINLAYSON, in the *Plover*, had gone but a very small part of the way towards San Francisco in quest of the supposed American trading vessel which he hoped had rescued Rae from the Masset Indians, when he met the steamer *Beaver* coming up with Mr. Douglas on board.

He at once hove to, and went over to the steamer in a boat to inform the chief factor of what had happened, and to ask his advice.

Mr. Douglas listened to the narration with deep interest and sympathy. He had by no means forgotten his young friend Rae, and, quite aside from his desire to help the distracted father, felt eager to do anything he could for the boy's own sake.

"You shall have my utmost assistance, Finlayson," said he warmly; "but let me say at the start that I think you are only losing time in going down to San Francisco. There have been no American vessels up this way lately, I understand, and the vessel on which your son escaped must have been a Russian. They sometimes do come

down as far as the Queen Charlotte Islands; and although I've always objected to their doing so, for they spoil our trade, yet, if one of them has been the means of rescuing Rae, it will go far to make up for the trouble they've given. So now this is what I propose — that we return to Fort Camosun as fast as possible, and, leaving the schooner there, proceed in the *Beaver* to Fort Wrangel, and, if need be, to Sitka. We're certain to get tidings of Rae at one or other of these places, if not indeed to find the dear boy there, safe and sound, as I greatly hope. What do you say, Finlayson?"

Mr. Finlayson could with difficulty find words to express his thanks. The chief factor's plan seemed to him perfect, and, for the first time since the news had come of Rae's capture by the Indians, his heart felt light.

So the schooner's head was turned about, and she followed in the wake of the steamer to Fort Camosun, where she was left at her moorings. The *Beaver*, as soon as Mr. Douglas had attended to some necessary business, continued her course northward, with Fort Wrangel as her destination.

The voyage thither was made without special incident or loss of time, and Mr. Douglas's sagacity was confirmed at the first inquiry after the missing boys.

"Oh yes," was the prompt reply of the commander of the fort, "the two English boys had been there, but they had not remained long. They had gone on to Sitka on the same vessel which had brought them, and, no doubt, they would be found there."

Accordingly, without waiting to avail himself of the invitation to dinner the commander warmly pressed upon him, the chief factor hastened on to Sitka, taking with him as pilot a Russian sailor who had a thorough knowledge of the difficult navigation of the coast.

"We're right on your boy's track now, Finlayson," said Mr. Douglas as they steamed away from Fort Wrangel. "He can't have gone further than Sitka, and he's probably waiting there for you to come after him."

"I hope so, indeed," responded Mr. Finlayson. "This suspense is very hard to bear, thankful as I am to know that he is in good hands, and that it's only a question of time when I'll see him once more."

Slipping safely through Peril Strait at the right state of the tide, the *Beaver* made a good passage to Sitka, and created quite a sensation there as she ploughed her way into the harbor, and came to anchor in front of the castle.

Mr. Finlayson was trembling with excitement and impatience as they hastened ashore in the boat, and up to the castle, where they were courteously received by the governor. His eyes were glancing in every direction in hopes of seeing Rae or some sign of his presence, and, not daring to trust his own voice, he left to Mr. Douglas the business of making inquiry as to his son.

The sharpness of his disappointment may therefore be conceived when he learned that he was once more too late; that Rae had been at Sitka, and indeed was expected back there soon, but was not there now, having gone away off to Pribylov Islands.

"The Pribylov Islands!" cried Mr. Finlayson, in a tone of mingled amazement and concern; "what on earth possessed him to go there? It's a most dangerous trip, I understand, and there's no knowing what might happen to him."

The governor explained about Baranov, and suggested that Rae, assuming that he would have time to make the trip before his father could reach Sitka, and being eager to see the home of the famous fur seals, had seized the opportunity to do so. He would most probably be back within a week, and the *Beaver* had better remain at Sitka, when Mr. Douglas and Mr. Finlayson would be most welcome guests.

But the anxious, impatient father would not consent to any such arrangement. Since Rae had gone to the fur-seal islands he must follow him thither, and he was with difficulty persuaded to yield to the governor's importunities to the extent of dining with him once at the castle. On the following morning the *Beaver* steamed away from Sitka, and, for the first time on the voyage, leaving sight altogether of land, ventured out upon the vast expanse of the North Pacific that stretched between Sitka and the Aleutian peninsula.

"We'll surely run that fox of yours to earth this time, Finlayson," said Mr. Douglas good humoredly. "He's certainly given us a long chase of it. Won't he have a lot to tell us of his adventures, for, no doubt, he's been having a lovely time of it."

"God grant he may have passed safely through them,

sir," murmured the factor of Fort Camosun, upon whose spirit each fresh disappointment had told heavily, and who was beginning to be haunted by the fear that he would never see his boy again. "Rae has never meant to give us so much trouble and concern. He'll be able to explain it all, I'm sure; but this uncertainty is hard to bear," and the poor man sighed heavily as he turned away to hide his brimming eyes.

As the *Beaver* drew near the Aleutian peninsula she met the same storm as had so ruthlessly interfered with the sea-otter hunt in which the boys were taking part, and, stanch, sturdy craft as she was, found it no easy task to struggle against it.

Indeed, when the gale raged most fiercely, Mr. Douglas ordered the vessel to lie to until the sea should go down, as he did not consider it safe to send her through it, so many billows were breaking over her.

"I pray that my poor boy is not out in this storm," said Mr. Finlayson, having in mind the small schooner in which he had been informed the trip to the Pribylov Islands was made. "The *Beaver* evidently has all she can do to stand up against it, and a small sailing vessel could hardly weather it in safety."

Little did the factor imagine that while he was speaking Rae and his companions were being tossed about on the heaving billows in a light skin-covered boat that he would scarcely have trusted to carry him from Vancouver Island to the mainland, across the still waters of Juan de Fuca Strait.

In truth, could he have realized Rae's situation at that moment, it must have driven him frantic with fear and anxiety. But he was comforting himself with the hope that the boy was safely in port somewhere, and not exposed to the blind pitiless wrath of the elements.

As has been already stated, the gale moderated towards evening, and the sea became less boisterous; not only so, but an hour after sunset the moon appeared, and, being not long past the full, poured a flood of light upon the tossing waters.

This welcome change in the weather cheered Mr. Finlayson's heart, and he paced the deck with a lighter step. Mr. Douglas had gone below, and there was only the night watch on deck, so that the factor was left to his own thoughts.

"My poor dear boy!" he murmured; "indeed if Providence be kind enough to give you back to me, we shall not soon be separated again. Hallo! what is that? It looks like some kind of a boat. — Ahoy there, watch! Do you make out anything on the port side? Look!"

The sailors thus appealed to scanned the sea carefully, but could make out nothing except what they took to be the shadows of the waves, for none of them had so keen a sight as the factor.

He was positive, however, he saw something more than shadows, and calling up Mr. Douglas, pointed out to him a dark object in the water a couple of hundred yards away, and only dimly revealed by the moonlight.

Mr. Douglas was doubtful as to its being more than a

floating log at most, but he ordered the steamer to be directed towards it.

As the *Beaver* approached the object, Mr. Finlayson watched it intently, and soon had the accuracy of his vision confirmed, for it proved to be one of the bidarkies which had joined in the "spear-surround." It contained two natives, who, utterly exhausted from their long struggle with the storm, had been resting for a while ere they renewed their endeavor to reach one of the islands.

Little imagining how closely the information they could give would touch the purpose of the *Beaver's* presence in those waters, Mr. Douglas gave the poor creatures a warm welcome on board, and, after seeing that they had been well fed, had a talk with them through the medium of the Russian sailor who was acting as his pilot.

They had very little to say for themselves, and it was not until Mr. Douglas was about to dismiss them that a chance remark about the "white strangers" aroused his interest, and he pressed for further particulars.

By dint of determined questioning, enough was elicited to convince him and Mr. Finlayson that the boys with their Russian friend had formed part of the hunting party, and that, if they had not already gone to the bottom, they must now be tossing about somewhere in the vicinity, striving to make their way back to land.

The excitement on board the *Beaver* when this became generally known was intense. Not a man thought of sleep, the bunks were deserted even by those who had but

a little while before turned in, and climbing into the rigging, or posting themselves at the bow, they swept the moonlit sea on every side in eager search for the bidarka which carried such precious freight.

Twice was the glad cry roused of "Boat ahoy!" and the steamer bore down upon a floating object which did indeed prove to be a native boat, but not the one they were most anxious to find. Yet they were glad to rescue the exhausted Aleuts, and they took encouragement from their being able to do so.

Poor Mr. Finlayson's agitation was pitiful to witness. With parched lips and palpitating heart he strode the deck, straining his eyes to every point of the compass, and murmuring brokenly,—

"O God, give me back my boy! He's all I have in the world now. Spare him, good Lord, spare him, or my heart will break."

Mr. Douglas strove to cheer him with words of kindest sympathy, but the factor seemed not to hear them as he moved restlessly hither and thither, never taking his eyes off the tossing waves.

Suddenly there came from a sailor in the main-truck the shout of "Boat ahoy, on the port bow," and at once the *Beaver* was pointed thither.

She had not gone far toward it before it was visible to all on board, because it was so much larger than those that had been previously encountered, and Mr. Finlayson noticed that a couple of the rescued natives who stood near him were pointing it out to one another in a signifi-

cant way, and looking very much pleased. Without knowing just why, he interpreted this as a sign of promise, and it increased his wild impatience, as he awaited the steamer's approach to the bidarka.

She was still fifty yards off when a figure rose in the bidarka, and, waving something in its hand, called out in a faint and broken yet audible voice,—

“*Beaver* ahoy! You're just in time,” and then fell back as though overcome with emotion or weakness.

Had not Mr. Douglas laid his restraining grasp upon him, Mr. Finlayson would surely have sprung overboard in his frantic eagerness to reach the boat as he cried,—

“It's Rae! it's Rae! O God be praised! It's my own darling boy!”

A few minutes more and the bidarka was alongside the steamer, and a score of strong loving hands were stretched out to lift its occupants on board; Rae, Freckles, and Baranov, so exhausted by exposure and anxiety that they could hardly stand upon their feet, and the four natives who had, with such marvellous skill and endurance, struggled against the storm through the long hours when death threatened every moment.

How shall the scene that followed be put into words! The gruffest of the “old salts” in the *Beaver's* crew felt his eyes grow moist as Mr. Finlayson again and again pressed Rae to his heart. Was there ever a gladder reunion of father and son? and what one on board could refuse to join in the rejoicing?

After many fond embraces, Mr. Finlayson laid his

hands upon Rae's shoulders, and, lifting his eyes to heaven, said in solemn fervent tones, —

“O God, I give thee heartfelt praise, ‘for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’”

And, as he concluded, Mr. Douglas, by a happy inspiration, began to sing, “Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,” with the full strength of his stentorian voice.

Many of the sailors had not sung it since they had left their homes in the mother land, but it had not passed out of their memories, and one by one they joined in as best they could, until the glorious doxology went ringing out far over the heaving waters, while the natives listened with faces full of wonder at this, to them, most strange proceeding.

Rae would have liked to begin at once the recital of the moving accidents by flood and field, the hair-breadth escapes, and the enlightening experiences which had fallen to his lot since he parted from his father, but, eager as Mr. Finlayson was to hear about them all, he knew that the boy sorely needed to rest and recuperate after his long exposure to wind and wave.

“You must keep your story till the morning, Rae,” said he, fondly yet firmly; “you are too tired to talk. Come now to my cabin, and I’ll tuck you in for a good long sleep.”

Mr. Douglas took charge of Baranov, and saw that he had comfortable accommodation, nor was Freckles neglected; and in a little while they had all retired, and the deck of the steamer was deserted, save for the officer on duty and the steersman.

By Mr. Douglas's orders the steamer kept on her way to Belcovsky, in order that the rescued natives might be returned to their homes, and, by daylight on the following morning, had safely made the roadstead, where she came to anchor while the Aleuts disembarked.

Baranov was warmly invited to remain on board, Mr. Douglas offering to go back to Sitka with him, but he preferred rejoining the schooner; and so he and Rae parted, after exchanging rifles as mementos of their meeting, and many expressions of hope that in the course of events they would cross each other's path again.

They had grown warmly attached during their companionship, and it was with sincere regret on the part of both that they said "Good-bye."

"We've had a good time together, haven't we, Alexander?" said Rae, as they stood with clasped hands at the gangway where the boat was waiting to take the Russian over to his schooner, "and you've been very good to me. I'll never forget you as long as I live."

"Nor shall I ever forget you, Rae," responded Baranov earnestly; "and because I knew you and your people," looking around at Mr. Finlayson and Mr. Douglas, "I will always believe that the British are better people than I was brought up to think."

"And after what I've seen of you and your people," returned Rae with equal heartiness, "I will always stand up for the Russians whenever anybody dares say anything against them."

An hour later the *Beaver* bade farewell to Belcovsky,

and began the long voyage southward and homeward, in the course of which Rae had ample time to relate his adventures to his father and Mr. Douglas, who listened to them all with unflagging interest.

"How wonderfully the good Lord cared for you, my darling boy!" exclaimed Mr. Finlayson fervently again and again as the story of his son's experience was unfolded. "Surely you are destined for something great and good in the world, or he would not thus have given his angels charge over you."

"Indeed I don't know, father," Rae would reply; "but this I'm sure of, that I'm not going away from you again in a hurry. I did miss you so much the whole time."

"And if you missed me while you were in the midst of all that excitement and adventure, how much more do you think I missed you while I was waiting so anxiously at Fort Camosun for you to return?" asked Mr. Finlayson.

"Well, never mind, father dear," responded Rae, nestling his face against the factor's broad shoulder; "I promise you I won't run away again for ever so long," and he sealed his covenant with a right hearty kiss that made his father's face glow with proud delight.

On the voyage down Mr. Finlayson had a talk with Mr. Douglas which resulted in his deciding to carry out very soon a plan that had for some time past been forming in his mind.

He had not revisited his native land since he came out to Canada to enter into the service of the Hudson Bay

Company, and he was now entitled to a year's leave of absence from duty on full pay.

Of this right he would avail himself if his chief had no objections.

"Why, certainly, Mr. Finlayson," was Mr. Douglas's prompt response to the factor's application. "There is no reason why you should not take your leave if you wish it. Fort Camosun is well established, and Mr. Ogden can look after it, and it will do both yourself and Rae the world of good. You must go by all means."

Thus it came about that not long after the return to Fort Camosun, where Rae had a welcome worthy of a prince, he set off again, this time in company with his father, and having the centres of civilization, not the remote recess of the wilderness, in view.

It being arranged that Freckles should be added to the garrison of the fort in a capacity suited to his slender abilities, Rae could bid good-bye to him with the comfortable conviction that his life henceforth would be free from all hardship; and although it was not easy to part from the poor fellow who had shared so many adventures with him, still there was no alternative under the circumstances.

Carried by the *Beaver* down to San Francisco, Mr. Finlayson and Rae took the steamer thence to New York *viâ* the Isthmus of Panama, and from New York sailed for England.

How Rae was impressed by the wonders of London, of Edinburgh, and of Paris, and how intensely he enjoyed

and how richly he profited by his year's travel, cannot be set down here.

When his father's leave was up they returned together to Fort Camosun, whose name had in the meantime been changed to Fort Victoria in honor of Great Britain's Queen. Entering into the service of the company, Rae saw the new West grow up with wonderful vigor all about him, and, not neglecting to secure a full share in the general progress and prosperity, in due time he came to be one of the foremost men in the land, where his name is still familiar to those who take pride in the country's history.

THE END.



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